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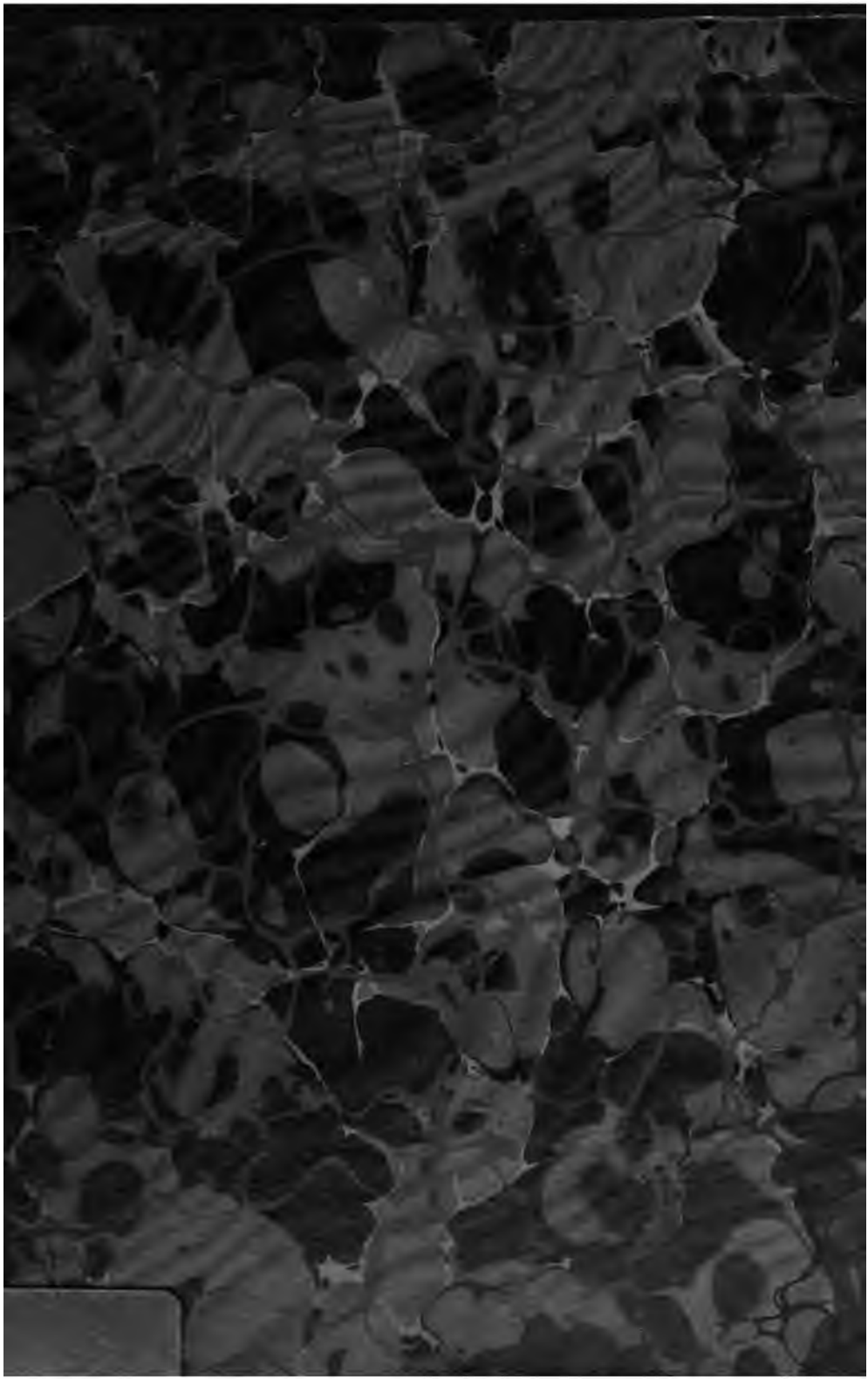

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In vain did Dupont shout "Stop! stop!"

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY JOHN SLOAN

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In vain did Dupont shout "Stop! stop!"

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY JOHN SLOAN

The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

MONSIEUR DUPONT

Translated into English by

MARY HANFORD FORD

VOLUME II

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

BOSTON LONDON PARIS

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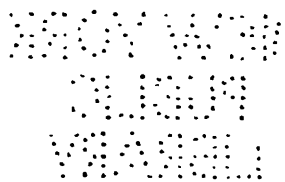

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CHAPTER I

The Consumptive

Perceiving through one of the windows of the apartment occupied by M. Dalmont that a light was still burning, Adolphe knocked at the door, and presently the voice of his father was heard from above, inquiring who would enter at that late hour.

"Open!" said Adolphe; "open the door, father dear; it is your son!"

"My son!" exclaimed M. Dalmont, in a feeble voice; and, descending the stairs as quickly as his strength would permit, he was soon in Adolphe's arms.

The young man clasped his parent to his breast, but what a painful impression marred the joy of this long-expected meeting; for he could not fail to mark the frightful change which was but too evident in his dear father's personal appearance. Though he was barely forty-two years of age, M. Dalmont's bodily vigor appeared to have entirely deserted him. His body was shrunken and emaciated as that of an old man. He was feeble and languishing; his eyes were sunken, and glittered feverishly; his face was very pale, though a

hectic flush glowed occasionally on his cheeks, revealing the existence of that internal evil which physicians can rarely heal. A constant cough exhausts such a patient, as well as the kind nurses who seek in vain to relieve it.

Adolphe was careful that his father should not see his alarm. "You are ill," he said, "and I have hastened to come and nurse you."

"It is nothing; it is nothing," replied M. Dalmont; "an obstinate cold has annoyed me, but it will be better now that you are here."

Adolphe appointed himself his father's nurse, for in his poverty he had no one to care for him.

"I will not leave you again," he said, "until you are entirely well," and the next day the young man took charge of all the details of the little household.

Adolphe saw with delight that his father's malady had not increased his natural melancholy; on the contrary, M. Dalmont appeared gayer than usual, and was full of plans for the future.

"My dear boy," he said to Adolphe, "I believe fate is weary of buffeting me. I have found a friend here, who is soon to have an important place in Paris in the ministry. He has not forgotten me in his prosperity, but, on the contrary, promises me a lucrative position near him. So we can live together, and, in the end of my career, I shall be happy and comfortable."

This hope was a delightful one to Adolphe

also; and, though he did not trust too much to the promises of the powerful friend, he encouraged his father in building the castle which made the future so charming to him.

Every day, when the weather was fine, Adolphe went out with his father, supporting his feeble steps. He guided him and gave him his arm, that he might breathe the fresh air on these beautiful winter mornings, and this employment was very dear to him. He rejoiced in the opportunity of caring for his father, and if the memory of Eugénie occasionally occupied his thoughts, and drew a sigh from him, the idea of leaving his suffering parent never mingled with his regrets at being parted from her he loved. Meanwhile he heard nothing from Jeanneton, and took it for granted that Eugénie had gained time, and that the marriage was postponed.

Despite Adolphe's care, M. Dalmont did not improve. Soon he could not leave his room, but passed the day seated by his fireside. His son was his faithful companion; the father, buoyed by the hope of the place in Paris, made many plans for the future. Adolphe listened, and approved of all these plans; but when he saw his father's hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, and heard his feeble voice, he turned away to conceal the tears which started in spite of himself.

Sometimes M. Dalmont thought of his brother Georges. "Perhaps he isn't dead," he said to

Adolphe. "Perhaps he will come back some day. Poor Georges! How I should like to see him again! Who knows, he may have made a fortune, and if he has, I am sure he will share it with us."

Happy the invalid who does not realize his condition, and is soothed by hope even to the grave! For him death is only a slumber, and he falls asleep without suspecting that for him there will be no awakening. But for those who surround him, how sorrowful are the moments! To see a father, a brother, a friend, extinguished; to see him while still young succumb to the malady which is killing him; to know that nothing can save him, that soon he will be separated from us forever,—this idea has something in it that is frightful and desolating; and each time that one hears the sufferer forming plans for his future, in a world from which he is so soon to depart, one's sorrow is indescribably augmented.

Six weeks had rolled away since Adolphe had left Paris, and he had no news of Eugénie. The poor lover did not understand this long silence; but he trusted in his sweetheart's love and her promise to be true. He hoped that the situation remained unchanged; but in any case he could not leave his father.

M. Dalmont's strength was diminishing a little every day. He rose with difficulty; his limbs could scarcely support him. Adolphe always tried

to find some natural explanation for this increase of feebleness. He dreaded to have his father waken to a realization of his actual condition; he wished him to entertain his sweet illusions to the end.

M. Dalmont sighed sometimes at the continuance of his illness. "How much trouble I cause you!" he said. "How you distress yourself to get me what I need! and what care you take of me! Dear Adolphe, I'm afraid it's no use."

"O father! don't say that. I hope you don't think that."

"Oh, I'm afraid I shall be ill a long time. My strength does not return. You see it's winter now."

"Yes, father, and when spring comes you will surely be better. We must be patient."

"Yes; in fact I wish it were already spring; to go out with you to see the green fields, to walk out in the country in the beautiful paths bordered with acacias,—I feel as if that would do me good. In spring I shall recover. Still, my strength diminishes daily; my hands tremble; I can scarcely hold them steady."

"That's nervousness, not weakness."

"Ah, my dear, how sad it is to be at once sick and destitute! You deprive yourself of everything for me."

"What are you thinking of, father? You know that you still have your salary, and I have saved

something in Paris. Don't worry about anything; just think of getting well, and we shall be very happy."

In this way Adolphe tried to conceal from his father his real situation; but he grew constantly worse. Soon he could not even lift his hand to his lips to take the slight nourishment of which his condition permitted him to partake. His trembling hands fell upon his knees, refusing their wonted office. His eyes filled with tears. For the first time he seemed to divine his danger. Adolphe saw his father's tears. Never did such a feeling of agony tear his heart. He ran quickly to the invalid, —

"It's nothing! it's nothing!" he exclaimed. "You tremble. Your nerves are agitated. Let me help you."

Adolphe fed his father, and forced himself to appear cheerful, that the invalid might still be reassured. Poor Adolphe! All your cares cannot save your father; but at least they will sweeten his last moments, and the memory of what you have done will soften for you the anguish of parting. There is nothing sadder than regret for a failure of duty toward those whom death has snatched from us. There is no way of repairing the fault, and remorse is eternal.

Each day the powers of the sick man weakened; he could scarcely swallow the potions which his son presented to him. He was no more than

a shadow of his former self; his voice was faint; his features wore already too evident indications that the melancholy transition was near. To strangers he was a frightful skeleton; to Adolphe he was still his father. M. Dalmont had no longer strength to speak, but he still smiled at Adolphe, and his trembling hand tried to press that of his cherished son.

Adolphe took no rest; he watched constantly by the invalid's bed. When slumber closed the sufferer's eyes for a few moments, Adolphe, beholding the ravages of the disease in his father's face, knew that soon he would be snatched from his care.

After such a night of watching, the boy succumbed, despite himself, to weariness; his head fell upon his father's pillow, and he dropped asleep. He had not been in bed for four nights, and did not wake till late in the day. What was his surprise to feel his parent's hand in his, but it was icy cold. Adolphe looked at his father. His eyes were closed; he could no longer hear his son's appealing call.

For a long time Adolphe could not but foresee the end; but does one ever entirely lose hope? Some officious neighbors, hearing his loud cries, ran in, and tried to draw him from the scene of his sorrow. But Adolphe said, "No, no; I am a man, and I can bear my anguish; I will watch what is left of my father until the last moment.

Why should we flee with such haste from the remains of our loved ones? Why this secret terror which so many people experience near the body of one who is no more? Can we ever fear one who has loved and cherished us? And can one render homage to those whom one has lost, by flying from them with fright? No, I will stay with my father until the last moment."

The neighbors were astonished at this resolution; it seemed astonishing to them that one would voluntarily endure a spectacle which could only intensify his sorrow. Adolphe did not feel so. Removed from his father, his sorrow would have been equally vivid; and, besides, far from seeking to diminish it, he experienced a sweetness in yielding to it. M. Dalmont was poor; his son alone accompanied his body to the grave. But a good son is worth incomparably more than a funeral cortège brought together by etiquette and vanity, and in which often the deceased would not have found a single friend.

CHAPTER II

Jeanneton Gets a New Place

It is now high time for us to return to Paris to learn what has been passing in M. Moutonnet's family. After the night of the adventure with Jacques, the water carrier, Madame Moutonnet, whose suspicion had been fully awakened on that occasion, redoubled her vigilance, and did almost everything in her power to hasten the day on which her daughter should become Madame Dupont.

Poor Eugénie was kept closely shut in her room; she was only allowed to come out for her meals, and she no longer had an opportunity to talk with Jeanneton, for she never saw the good girl now except in her mother's presence. The maid also looked very sad; M. Moutonnet said nothing, but trembled, and watched his wife carefully; Bidois, however, seemed very busy. There were frequent secret conferences between him and Madame Moutonnet; and the old clerk, enchanted at the honor of possessing Madame's confidence, assumed an outrageous air of importance, even with M. Moutonnet.

Eugénie did not know what to think of what

she saw. Had they discovered her interview with Adolphe? Of course her mother said nothing. But Jeanneton no longer talked with her, and Adolphe did not try to see her. "Everyone has abandoned me," she said to herself. The poor little thing was broken-hearted; her eyes were red with tears, and the situation grew no better.

Jeanneton had received Adolphe's note; but she was still enraged at a young lover who could cohabit with a dancer, while poor Eugénie dreamed and spoke and thought of none but him. Jeanneton had no patience with such errors in a young man. She was only a simple maid, a stout servant; a lady's maid would have known the world better, would have shut her eyes to Adolphe's peccadillo. Besides, Jeanneton could not stop the current of events. She could do nothing more than comfort Eugénie; but to do this she would have to see her, and say, "Your lover is faithful; he will always love you." She had no longer the courage to say that, and she dared not tell Eugénie what she had witnessed. A single hope consoled Jeanneton, — if Eugénie married Dupont she would require a domestic, and the buxom maid said to herself, "She is sure to take me, and then I shan't have to leave her."

All was ready; the day was set, and the marriage was to be concluded. Dupont had already made his purchases. He had bought his wedding presents, and he could not resist the temptation

to send with them some packages of fine chocolate and marshmallows. A week before he had ordered a complete outfit for his wedding-day. He besought his hairdresser to plan some novel way of arranging his locks; he bought some new charms for his watch-chain, and, with the old ones, they made such a noise that you could hear them a hundred steps away, and people turned round in a fright, thinking that it was a horse with bells. Dupont was enchanted at being noticed. He smiled at everybody, and everybody laughed at him.

He occupied an apartment above his shop; but this apartment was not large enough for a man who was going to set up an establishment. Dupont rented all of the next story, and busied himself with the arrangement of his new domain.

Dupont knew very little about such things. He called up his two shopmen and asked their advice; but they did not know any more than their master, and could only look upon each room as suitable for a kitchen or toilet-room. Dupont considered a kitchen and a toilet-room of great importance; but all the rooms could not be kitchens and toilet-rooms. In this dilemma he decided to consult Madame Moutonnet, and meanwhile he had the walls freshly papered everywhere.

Just as he was starting for the house of his future mother-in-law, Jeanneton appeared before him. The respite she had obtained from Madame

Moutonnet had just expired. The servant knew that the marriage was to take place in a few days, and decided to install herself at once with Eugénie's future husband.

"Why, is that you, Jeanneton?" said Dupont, as he saw the stout maid.

"Yes, sir; here I am."

"And what do you want? Did you come after something? Go to the shop, my dear, and take your choice."

"No, monsieur; I didn't come here for any such purpose. You're going to marry Mamzelle Eugénie — aren't you?"

"Yes, Jeanneton, in three days, — next Tuesday."

"All right, monsieur; I have come to take my place."

"What! to take your place?"

"Of course. Won't your wife need a servant? Very well; mamzelle wants me."

"Oh, you're the girl, Jeanneton — are you? I'm very glad. You'll suit me to a T; but tell me, are you a good cook?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, — very good."

"I think you'll do first rate. You're young and spry; you have a fat, fresh face, and I like to have fresh-looking people around."

"You're very good, monsieur."

"So you are going to leave Madame Moutonnet?"

"Yes, monsieur; I must follow mamzelle. I'd leave anybody for her sake."

"Oh, that's very nice,—very nice; that shows attachment,—attachment."

"It was for that very reason I got myself discharged. Mamzelle and I planned the affair between us."

"Bravo! that wasn't badly managed. Goodness! now you are here, you'll help me to arrange my apartment."

"What, monsieur! isn't it ready?"

"Of course it is; only the furniture has to be put in place, and you know the tastes of Eugénie."

"Certainly, monsieur, I do."

"Then, Jeanneton, you shall be my guide."

The grocer took the maid into the new apartment, where nearly all the wall papers were chocolate color.

"It's so melancholy, monsieur," said Jeanneton.

"Why, how's that, my dear? I like the colors that suggest my trade. Folks will say, 'There's a man that knows his business.' You see, my alcove is in pistachio and my dining-room is in olive. I'm delighted with my choice."

"But, monsieur, I see only one sleeping-room."

"Why, how many would you have?"

"Gracious! one for you and one for your wife."

"Why, shouldn't I sleep with my wife?"

"Oh, monsieur, if you wish to please mamzelle you will give her a room to herself. You see, young ladies nowadays like to have a room to themselves; it is much more convenient. Besides, you can then go and come without disturbing madame. You'll be up early in the morning, and mamzelle will get up late after she's married."

"What! she's going to get up late? Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, yes; mamzelle herself told me so."

"Why, Madame Moutonnet told me that her daughter was a very early riser."

"Yes, at present she is. But, you see, mamzelle expects, when she's married, to do as she pleases."

"Oh, she will, Jeanneton; I will not oppose her in anything."

"In so acting, monsieur, you'll do well; and I'm sure you'll be every whit as happy as M. Moutonnet."

"Do you think so?"

"And then, monsieur, that's not all; mamzelle is often ill. She has nervous attacks, and, if you sleep with her — gracious! I forewarn you that they are contagious."

"What! you think they are contagious?"

"Certainly, monsieur."

"The devil! But Madame Moutonnet told me nothing about that. But, say, is her malady contagious when she has not the attacks?"

"Oh, no, monsieur; of course not."

"All right, Jeanneton; I see that you're right. It's much better that we each have our room. That will be no obstacle — when we wish — Isn't that so, Jeanneton?"

"Pardi, monsieur! Shan't you always be her husband?"

"That's true; I shall always be her husband; and, beside, two rooms give an air of nobility, of grandeur, of — I am delighted that you've given me this idea."

"But, monsieur, pray don't speak of this to Madame Moutonnet. She'd tell her daughter, and you wouldn't have the pleasure of surprising her."

"Don't let that trouble you; I'll say nothing. Ah, but something has just struck me; the first night, will my wife come to my room or shall I go to hers?"

"Why, monsieur, it seems to me that the husband would go in quest of his wife."

"That's the very thing; I know now exactly how to act; I'll go to the bride; Jeanneton, arrange everything just as you please. I depend on you."

Jeanneton selected for Eugénie the room that was farthest from that of M. Dupont. This room had two doors. One opened into the salon and the other into a passage which led to a room adjoining the kitchen; this was to be Jeanneton's

room; thus the good girl could be always near her mistress, ever ready to serve and console her; and Jeanneton was very sure that this arrangement would exactly suit Eugénie.

While Jeanneton was thus installed at the grocer's, Madame Moutonnet sought her daughter, and announced to her that in three days she would be Madame Dupont. She commanded her to cease her whining, which would have no effect whatever on her mother's resolution.

"Very well," said Eugénie to herself, "since it must be so, since they force me, I suppose I must yield. I will marry M. Dupont; but I shall die, and so be faithful to Adolphe."

Poor little thing! She believed that one dies when one does not marry the man she loves. There are still some young girls who think so, but their number diminishes every day.

Eugénie called Adolphe, but Adolphe heard her not. She called Jeanneton, and Jeanneton could not answer her. A new servant, old, cross and surly, had replaced the buxom maid. When she saw her Eugénie gave up all hope.

"They have sent away my good Jeanneton," she said. "Now I have no one to console me, no one to pity me, and to whom I can talk about him. I can see that they want to kill me."

They brought Eugénie M. Dupont's wedding presents, from which Madame Moutonnet took pains to remove the packages of chocolates and

marshmallows. They spread before her an adornment resplendent in topazes, shawls and fine stuffs of various kinds. "Oh, how beautiful!" said Bidois, who had brought the gifts into Eugénie's room. "How rich! how splendid! Oh, but they are really superb!" said the old servant, putting on his glasses to have a better look. "M. Dupont certainly knows how to make a good selection."

Eugénie had nothing but a scornful glance for all this richness, and she threw the ornaments aside without so much as looking at them. A young girl, and not regard such presents! Poor Eugénie! She must be very much in love with Adolphe.

Eugénie still hoped that something would happen to break off her marriage. She would not believe she was really to be the grocer's wife. That night she did not sleep. At the slightest noise she rose to listen at the window or at the door. She expected to hear Adolphe's voice. She looked for his coming to save her. She implored Love and Providence to come to her aid; Love laughs, however, at the tears which he causes, and Providence rarely interferes with such affairs.

The day preceding that of her marriage was almost at its end and nothing was changed in Eugénie's situation.

"It's all over," she said, drying her tears. "I must marry a man I detest. I am to be sacrificed.

I shall marry him, since obey I must; but I here renew my oath to be faithful to Adolphe."

The young girl knelt in her room and called Heaven to witness the oath she had just taken; at the same time she prayed that she might die of sorrow; but Heaven was deaf to her prayer. It did well. A pretty woman ought only to die of pleasure.

While Eugénie prayed, wept and sorrowed, a company assembled in the shop below and rejoiced over the approaching marriage.

"It is to be tomorrow," said Madame Moutonnet with a triumphant air.

"Yes, it is to be tomorrow," replied her husband, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Yes, it will be tomorrow," said Bidois, rubbing his hands as if he felt he had contributed to the success of the affair.

"I have had considerable trouble," said Madame Moutonnet. "This little thing for the first time dared to show that she had a will of her own. She, forsooth, must have her likings and dislikings; but, thank Heaven, I possess some determination, and if I don't heed her sighs it is because I wish to assure her happiness. I am certain that in six months she will thank me for having married her to Dupont."

"Yes, surely, madame," said Bidois. "She will then see how much she owes you."

"And let me tell you, monsieur, if it had been

left to you to bring about this marriage, it would have failed."

"Yes, my heart," replied her husband. "You see that I had nothing to do with it."

"Thanks to my vigilance," said Bidois. "Those who wished to make trouble have not succeeded."

"Yes, Bidois, I am very well satisfied with your conduct. You shall be at the wedding, my friend."

"Ah, madame," said the old clerk, bowing to the ground.

"Do you hear, Bidois?" said M. Moutonnet. "You're to be at the wedding; my wife invites you. You shall be bridesman."

"Bridesman! What are you thinking about, Monsieur Moutonnet?" exclaimed madame. "Is Bidois of an age to be bridesman?"

"You're right, dear; I meant to say that he'll always be a bachelor, because, you see, he isn't married. But is there really to be a marriage feast?"

"Of course, monsieur; it's the fashion; besides, Dupont is pleased to have it so, and he'll be at all the expense."

"And a ball, sweetheart?"

"Such a question! Why, certainly."

"A ball! Oh, it's charming! We'll dance, Bidois, and none will insult us, as they did at Romainville; we shall enjoy ourselves to our hearts' content."

"Oh, you will make famous dancers,—you

and Bidois! Fortunately, however, there will be no lack of young folks. M. Dupont has any amount of acquaintances among young business men, and has, besides, two shopmen who, they say, dance like Hercules."

"How Eugénie will enjoy it!" said M. Moutonnet; "the dear child does so love dancing."

"Silence, Monsieur Moutonnet; you can say nothing without blundering."

"Can we know where the wedding is to be celebrated, madame?" asked Bidois, with a timid and respectful air.

"At the Barrière des Martyrs, in a first-class restaurant, which has a dining-hall that will seat one hundred people, and in which you can easily have two square dances at once. Dupont first thought of the Cadran Bleu, but I told him it was sheer madness; we should be crushed to death. He then thought of this place, which he himself supplies."

"Isn't it the Belle-en-Cuisses, my dear?"

"No, monsieur; it has nothing to do with Belle-en-Cuisses; besides, when you're there you'll see."

"Oh, I know," said Bidois, who had never been there; "I see now which it is; it's a tip-top restaurant; it's the Véry of the neighborhood."

"Precisely so, Bidois."

"The devil! Then, wife, we had better order potage aux croûtons; you've been promising me some for fifteen years."

"That's good; you think of nothing but eating."

"My love, which of your acquaintances will be at the wedding?"

"Don't concern yourself about that. I have sent the invitations. You had better be thinking of your toilet for tomorrow. I hope, sir, that you will be dressed becomingly for the occasion."

"Yes, my love; certainly."

"And you, Bidois?"

"Madame, I have had my coat for six years, but as I only wear it on extra occasions it is just as good as new."

"Very well. You must be ready in good time. Tomorrow, for a wonder, the shop will be shut."

CHAPTER III

The Wedding. The Husband's Trousers. The Home-Coming.

It had arrived, — the great day which was to unite Dupont and Eugénie, — the day on which they were to marry a young girl to a man whom she did not love.

This is not such a very unusual thing; but a weeping and disconsolate bride one very rarely sees, — thanks to heaven for those young ladies who are still so submissive to their parents as to allow themselves to be married without pouting about it; these yielding damsels when a husband is presented to them, be he ugly or handsome, old or young, accept him at once, — saving their reflections for afterwards. Besides, if they make any objections, their mothers whisper, —

"My daughter, a husband is always a desirable thing to have, because he is a husband; and these young dandies who sigh as they ogle you, and make sheep's eyes at you, and press your hands, and whisper soft nothings behind our backs, have not a single idea of marrying you."

And it must be confessed the mothers are too often right.

But Eugénie could not say that this was true of Adolphe. She knew that the poor fellow would not deceive her, that he had none but honorable views; and if he did not marry her it certainly was not his fault. This is why she wept, because she must marry another. A well-bred young girl may easily console herself for disappointment in a heedless fellow who thought only of ensnaring her; but it is permissible to regret a lover who is honest, sensitive and faithful; they are so rare.

This day which usually dawns so joyously for the bride, — this day which as a rule cannot come soon enough for a young girl's impatience, seemed sombre and melancholy to Eugénie, for whom the little hope that remained to her faded more swiftly each moment. She must resign herself to her fate. The poor child allowed them to arrange her hair, to dress her and adorn her, without a murmur. She sighed, and kept silent; all her sorrow was hidden at the bottom of her heart.

"How well she looks! How pretty she is! What a charming toilet!" they said, every moment, as she was being dressed; but she cared nothing about looking pretty, because Adolphe could not see her. She did not wish to please anyone, and she would have preferred to appear dowdy in Dupont's eyes.

They put on her bride's bonnet. Her heart swelled. She could no longer restrain the tears which ran down her pale, emaciated cheeks.

"But I must have courage," she said to herself, as she wiped away her tears. "These tears will bring blame to my mother, and I must repress them."

The toilet was finished, and the young maiden was ready to go to the altar.

"My daughter, you look very well, and I am satisfied with you," said Madame Moutonnet, as she kissed her daughter on the forehead. This compliment was the first kind word her mother had addressed to her, and Eugénie received it very coldly.

"Yes, my child," said M. Moutonnet, as he kissed Eugénie tenderly; "you are as pretty as an angel. This wedding dress is ravishingly becoming to you. Come, you will be very happy, my dear little one. Marriage is beautiful. You will tell me about it when you are settled, and Dupont will adore you, because—"

M. Moutonnet did not say more. His wife pulled him by the coat tail; she always finished his phrases in this way.

Dupont had not known what he was doing since five o'clock in the morning. He had already had his bath, blacked his shoes, had his hair dressed. He promenaded through every room of his apartment. He ran from his shop to his mirror, and called Jeanneton or his shopmen at every moment to come and help him. For the first time in his life he forgot the prices of sugar and coffee.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

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"How do I look?"
"Superb, monsieur."
"And my figure?"
"Admirable."

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ORSON LOWELL.

But in going and coming and running about, the grocer succeeded in finishing nothing, and, as time was rolling on, he must dress for the ceremony. His clothes were all laid out, — coat, vest and black breeches, white silk stockings and buckled shoes. Dupont spread all upon a piece of furniture, and stood still in admiration before his costume. "Decidedly," he said, "there is nothing lacking," and immediately began to don his wedding garments. The coat and waistcoat fitted beautifully, but the breeches were too tight.

"The devil!" said Dupont, trying to adjust himself easily. "I shall be a little tight. My thighs are pressed as if they were in a mould. It is true they fit better so; there is not a crease; they look like breeches of skin."

The grocer called Jeanneton and his clerks.

"How do I look?"

"Superb, monsieur."

"And my figure?"

"Admirable."

"It seems as if you would have a little trouble in walking, monsieur," said Jeanneton.

"My breeches are a trifle tight, but I hope they will yield a little by and by; besides, I haven't any other black ones, and one cannot very well wear yellow or cinnamon breeches to get married in. I know what is proper. But they are becoming — are they not?"

"Yes, monsieur; you are beautifully fitted."

"Well, I am ready at last; the gloves, the hat, and the bouquet. Are the three carriages at the door?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And have the coachmen bouquets?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"That's good; and have they put some on the horses also?"

"It's not the custom, monsieur; but if you wish it they can have them attached to their ears."

"Yes, that would be a very brilliant idea. One doesn't get married every day, and I want my wedding to be talked of for a long time. Joseph, go and get some branches of orange blossoms, and have them attached to the horses' heads."

"Yes, monsieur; and to the tails?"

"Let a bunch of immortelles be attached to each tail. I'm going to do things in fine style."

"All right."

"And, boys, you will close the shop at four o'clock, and you will join us at the restaurant Rue des Martyrs."

"Yes, monsieur."

"We shall dance this evening, and I know you will enjoy it, for you are indefatigable dancers. You must stay and keep the house, Jeanneton; but be good to yourself, and eat and drink what you please. Be sure and have my wife's room in order and arranged in taste. I leave the details to you; you understand, Jeanneton."

"Yes, monsieur."

Dupont went downstairs and prepared to enter one of the carriages. He was for a long time undecided as to which of the three he should choose. During this time the neighbors, passers-by and loiterers gathered before the grocer's door. He was delighted that his wedding should make such a sensation in the Rue aux Ours, and had the doors of the three carriages opened, entering each one successively. At last he made his choice, and the coachmen had orders to drive in single file. The bridegroom was in the first carriage. He drove off amid the applause of the crowd, for they had never before seen horses with bouquets at both head and tail.

On his way the bridegroom heard nothing but exclamations, shouts of joy, and cries of astonishment, which were aroused by the adornment of his coursers. Dupont was in a state of intoxication, of rapture; and the coachmen, who saw that the day was to be a good one, snapped their whips and indulged in gay songs, while the horses, astonished at the odor of the orange blossoms, and at the tickling of the bunches of immortelles fastened at their tails, galloped rapidly through the streets of Paris.

Dupont had but one cause of anxiety,—the tightness of those cursed breeches, which hindered all his movements.

"How the devil shall I dance this evening?"

he said. "I can neither lift nor shake my legs; however, later on, perhaps, the cloth will yield a little."

The fiancé, according to custom, took the relations and friends who were invited to assist at the civil and religious ceremonies. The carriages were filled with aunts, uncles and cousins, and at last they arrived at the bride's house.

"How fine they are! how gorgeous!" said M. Moutonnet, when he saw the carriages arrive.

"There are flowers everywhere," said Madame Moutonnet. "Nothing could be more genteel."

"This marriage will make him respected," said M. Gérard, who was at the wedding with all his family. Mademoiselle Cécile bit her lips and said nothing. She saw that, in spite of all her little plans, the grocer was to marry Eugénie.

"But the carriages will never hold us all," said M. Moutonnet.

"Well, some of you gentlemen will have to walk, — Bidois, in the first place."

"That's it," said the old clerk in a low tone, "and of course it's muddy; it would have been better to have had another carriage, instead of stuffing flowers behind the horses; it looks like a masquerade; I shouldn't be surprised to hear people shout, 'There's a guy!'"

Eugénie was seated, and remained motionless in the midst of all the movement about her. When a compliment was addressed to her, she

simply bowed. The men risked occasionally a light joke suggested by the circumstances; for, though marriage is the most serious of institutions, it is, however, the one about which one jokes the most. But in France one laughs at everything, and that is right. "Of all serious things, marriage is the most comical," said Beaumarchais; and that is, no doubt, why the French treat it so gayly.

Eugénie paid no attention to the conversation which went on about her. Sometimes her eyes sought the street, as if searching for someone. Then she lowered them sadly. Mademoiselle Cécile, who noticed everything, remarked from time to time, "It is surprising to see the bride so gay."

Dupont succeeded at last in alighting from the carriage, no easy matter, because he had difficulty in bending his knees. He presented himself with the air of a conquerer before his future wife. Madame Moutonnet pushed Eugénie and said to her, "My daughter, there is your husband." Eugénie rose, and gave her hand silently to Dupont, who in receiving it tried to recall the compliment which he had composed to recite at this very moment; but memory failed him, so he remained standing before Eugénie, silently holding her hand and looking at her with a vacant smile.

"Shall we start, my son?" said Madame Moutonnet.

Dupont searched his mind for a moment longer, but nothing came; so he said to himself, "I will say it when we return; it will be just the same."

He led his bride to the carriage, and everybody took seats in the coaches, excepting Bidois, the grocer's two shop boys and the little Gérard. It had rained and was very muddy, so these gentlemen consulted as to whether they should take a cab or go on foot. Each one searched his pockets in turn. The two assistants each had seven sous; the little Gérard found only two marbles in his pockets; and Bidois, after looking a long time at a ten-sous piece, finally said, "Gentlemen, we will walk on our tiptoes." This advice was accepted, and the gentlemen followed the coaches.

They went to the mayor's office first, where they waited only an hour and a half, which is a mere bagatelle when one is making a contract for life. Besides, in a great city there is always a crowd for marriages, baptisms and funerals; one continually gives place to the other. The world is a great magic-lantern, and we the slides, which appear, only to disappear.

They then went to the church of Saint Nicholas, where the religious ceremony was to be performed. A crowd of considerable size filled up the entrance way. The Moutonnet family was known to a great part of the Rue Saint Martin, and everybody on the Rue aux Ours knew that

Dupont was to be married; so all the world wished to see the bride and groom.

The elegance of the procession and the magnificent adornment of the horses had attracted everybody's attention. The passers-by stopped, and asked what was going on. "A marriage," was the reply. "Well, it must be a grand affair. We must see the face and figure of the bride and groom;" so the church of Saint Nicholas was tolerably well filled.

Dupont regretted only one thing, which was that he could not drive into the church in his carriage. That would have been a superb spectacle, he thought; but as this was impossible, he had to content himself with descending at the door, in which he was obliged to take the greatest precaution, so as not to tear his breeches.

"It is the husband," cried the spectators, and they laughed.

"It is the bride," they added; and they did not laugh, for Eugénie's pathetic face showed what was passing in her soul. Her eyes were full of tears. They were not the tender tears which a young maiden sheds when she plights her troth, but they were the bitter tears which spring from a deep sorrow.

She could scarcely walk as she ascended the steps, and everyone was touched by the appearance of this sweet and gentle young woman.

As she passed through the crowd, Eugénie

looked timidly about her; her eyes still sought Adolphe, — Adolphe, who was then caring for his father, and who little dreamed what was being enacted.

"He is not here," thought Eugénie. "He did not wish to witness my misery. He was wise; if I had seen him my courage would have disappeared. It was out of pity for me that he stayed away."

The future husband, very different from his wife, walked with a proud and joyous air. He rattled his trinkets and his watch-chains; he lifted his head, and looked about him, smiling and sniffing. He was painfully squeezed in his tight breeches; and, to avoid the expression of discomfort which would otherwise have contracted his face, he glanced at the crowd haughtily from time to time, as much as to say, "I am the bridegroom."

At last the ceremony began. Papa Moutonnet shed tears, and his wife pretended to be deeply touched. Dupont was extremely ill at ease, because he was obliged to kneel, and his breeches pinched him horribly. Eugénie, sorrowful but submissive, completed her sacrifice courageously; and everything was going as well as possible, when suddenly, in rising, the husband felt his breeches part. Dupont was horrified, and he did not know what would become of him. Supposing it should be noticed that the cursed breeches were torn?

The poor bridegroom completely lost his head, and, when he was asked if he promised to love his wife always, he replied, with a desperate air, "I always said they would be too tight."

Fortunately, the minister before the altar does not expect audible responses, because emotion is apt to interfere with pronunciation. M. Dupont drew his handkerchief from his pocket and thrust it into the torn place. When he moved to put the ring on his bride's finger, he pressed his legs together so the handkerchief should not fall; but the spectators could not understand the bridegroom's embarrassment.

At last the ceremony was ended; but the crowd had to be traversed once more, and of course all eyes were fixed upon the husband. Dupont gave one hand to his bride, and in the other held his handkerchief over the torn place in his breeches. Everyone made his conjecture as to the cause of the bridegroom's awkwardness. "Why the devil is he holding his handkerchief that way?" murmured Bidois.

M. Moutonnet called his wife's attention to Dupont's peculiar behavior. The bride alone had not noticed it.

They reëntered the carriages and took their way to the Rue des Martyrs. Dupont found himself in the carriage with his young lady cousins and his old aunts, and he responded to their questions with abstraction, because he was absorbed in

thinking how he should repair his unfortunate accident. He said nothing about it, but he still kept his handkerchief over the torn place.

They arrived at the restaurant, where everyone was in a state of excitement, because they had never entertained a wedding party of such importance. The company entered the hall; and, while they were waiting to seat themselves at the table, M. Gérard proposed that they should play some games.

Eugénie excused herself from taking part in these amusements on account of a violent headache; but Dupont could not refuse to participate in the pleasures of the evening. As soon as he arrived at the restaurant, he sought successively all the women servants, in hopes of getting someone to mend his breeches; but the servants were too much occupied with the progress of the feast to pay attention to the bridegroom, and poor Dupont was still obliged to hold his handkerchief pressed against his thigh, even when playing blind-man's-buff, button-button or London-bridge.

This affectation created some whispering among the guests. They looked at Dupont, then at each other; they laughed, and made mysterious remarks in low tones.

"It's very extraordinary," exclaimed the men. "What in the world is the matter with him?" said the ladies.

Madame heard the whispers, and saw that her

son-in-law was becoming the subject of general comment, which was more than she could endure.

"Decidedly, I must put an end to this," she said to her husband, "and find out what is the matter."

"Yes, my heart," said M. Moutonnet; "you must relieve your anxiety about it."

"I have two words to say to you, dear son-in-law," said Madame Moutonnet; "and I wish to say them strictly in private." She turned toward a little room at the side, and the bridegroom followed her, not suspecting what his mother-in-law wanted.

Madame did not know exactly how to begin the conversation, for the subject was a delicate one to introduce. She looked at her son-in-law with much gravity. Then she directed her eyes to the handkerchief which had caused so much excitement and amusement, glanced suggestively at M. Dupont, and coughed, covering her face with her fan. The grocer looked at his mother-in-law in astonishment. Then it suddenly dawned upon him that, in spite of the care he had taken to conceal it, the tear in his breeches was discovered. "What, mother! do you mean people have noticed that?"

"Of course, monsieur; that is what I have been killing myself trying to make you understand for an hour. Why didn't you tell me long ago? Parbleu, I hope it's big enough! You have made people think all sorts of things. Never

mind; we will soon have it sewed up. You poor Dupont! What a bad world this is!"

Madame Moutonnet ran to find a needle and thread, and soon returned to mend the breeches of the newly made husband. The task was difficult, but Dupont was delighted to see the end of his embarrassment; he stood motionless, one foot upon the floor, another upon the chair; while Madame Moutonnet, determined that no one should laugh at her son-in-law, sewed eagerly up and down, and back and forth, until the tear was mended.

At last the work was finished. Dupont felt more at ease. He put his handkerchief in his pocket and returned with his mother-in-law into the salon where the guests were assembled.

Madame Moutonnet thought that an explanation was due the company, to put an end to the malicious conjectures which had been so prevalent, and which might continue even when Dupont returned with his handkerchief in his pocket; she therefore advanced smiling to the centre of the circle, holding her son-in-law's hand, and said,—

"This poor fellow had torn his breeches, ladies; and that explains his embarrassment since we came from the church. I have now mended the tear, so you see he is no longer in a state of discomfort."

They seated themselves at the table. Eugénie was placed opposite the bridegroom, to whom she never dared to lift her eyes. How wearisome the

day seemed to the young wife! How she longed for the moment when she could be alone and would be free to weep her heart out! But she must restrain herself; she must conceal her sufferings. She could not force herself to touch a mouthful of that which was offered her. Gérard, who could not forget the caresses under the table at the betrothal dinner, looked tenderly at Eugénie, and said to himself, "This young woman has an unfortunate love affair, and I am undoubtedly the object of it."

Mademoiselle Cécile called the attention of her neighbors constantly to the bride's melancholy manner. Bidois, placed at the bottom of the table, between a little boy of seven and a girl of eight, demanded supplies as if he were serving three, but left the children in no danger of indigestion.

Dupont ate enough for four. He had decided not to be victimized by his tight breeches, but rather to sacrifice them to do honor to the dinner; so he had cut the band with a pair of scissors, in order to give himself plenty of room. M. Moutonnet imitated his son-in-law. Madame Moutonnet took much trouble to enliven the company, which the bride's face did not inspire with gayety. Three or four young men beat their sides to arouse laughter; and Dupont, who while stuffing and cramming was convinced that his wedding was very gay, repeated at every instant, "Heavens, what a good time we are having!"

The wine went round freely. The men became a little more talkative, the ladies a little more tender. At the second course all grew a trifle excited, and at the dessert there was a continual noise and laughter. Dupont repeated more frequently than ever, "Heavens, what a good time we are having!"

"We must sing," said M. Gérard, who made some pretensions to music. He was anxious to charm a little blond lady who sat next to him, and upon whom he had already bestowed some significant glances.

"Long live song! I love song," cried Dupont. "I have learned a pretty little topical song, which one of my grocer friends has composed; and I am going to sing it for you, but I want my wife to begin."

"My daughter never sings," said Madame Moutonnet. She felt that Engénie would never consent to sing on this occasion.

"It seems to me," said Mademoiselle Cécile, "that Madame Dupont sang very beautifully on Saint Eustache's day, at the birthday fête." The spinster gave this new title to Eugénie maliciously, because she saw that each time it was applied to her a long sigh escaped the breast of the sad young bride.

"My daughter has lost her voice," said Madame Moutonnet, "and on her wedding-day it is quite natural that emotion should disturb a bride."

"Gracious!" said Bidois under his breath, "anyone can see that she doesn't want to sing."

"Begin, Monsieur Moutonnet." At this command from his wife the old lace dealer began to shout a drinking-song, because he felt he was forbidden to sing of love. Gérard followed with "Richard, O My King." This had no connection with the wedding feast; but it is a very agreeable air, and so it is proper to sing on all occasions. The uncles, the aunts, the little cousins, — everybody sang. At last came the turn of the young husband. He fumbled in his pockets to find the stanzas that had been written for him, and discovered that he had forgotten them.

"Never mind," he said; "I know them by heart. They are written to the air — Pay attention now; it is a very pretty air. Oh, it is that. It is the air of mirliton and mirlitaine; you know it. I can't remember the first stanza; I knew it well this morning; but I'll commence with the second. I'll say the other afterwards, when it recurs to me."

"This is what I wish
From the bottom of my heart.
This is my wedding-vow,
Which assures you all your joy.
Mirliton ton ton, ton ton ton, ton taine;
Mirli, mirli, mirliton."

"Now," cried Dupont, "let everyone repeat the chorus, 'mirliton ton ton.'"

"That is very pretty," said M. Moutonnet, "but I don't quite understand what it is that you wish."

"Oh, that was in the first stanza; but it is just as well; you can imagine it. The fellow who made this song is awfully clever. He wins a prize every year in his country."

"A prize for poetry?" asked Gérard.

"No; a prize for shooting."

While the company sang at an ear-splitting rate; while the waiters took advantage of the excitement to carry away the half-filled bottles and have a little banquet of their own; while the servants brought a new course and the passers-by lingered in the street to hear the noise; while the scullions feasted in the kitchen, and the musicians tuned their instruments, — the little Fanfan crawled about under the table. He was looking for the bride's garter, which he had a right to carry away, as it belonged to the youngest bachelor at the wedding.

Madame Moutonnet did not consider this custom entirely modest; so she had not attached a ribbon to her daughter's leg. Eugénie also would have made but a sorrowful face over this ceremony; but M. Fanfan did not know the prejudices of the family, so he crawled about in vain under the table, and could not see the beautiful ribbon which ought to have been ready for him.

During this time the perfumer was carrying on

a lively flirtation with the blond lady who sat next to him. She seemed to listen to him with great patience, and he thought that he might take advantage of the tumult which surrounded them to make a tender declaration. He was afraid that if he put it into words it might be heard by his neighbors or noticed by his wife, so he decided to write his love in a touching stanza, and he prepared to deliver this to his fair lady, folding his note in his hands. He seized a favorable moment, and slipped it under the blond lady's girdle, which consisted of a beautiful rose-colored ribbon.

The young lady trembled at her neighbor's audacity, fearing that she might be compromised. She did not know whether she ought to read the note or return it, and in her agitation she unfastened her girdle and let it lie in her lap, having attached the note to it with a pin. A little later, when she could do so safe from observation, she intended to read the complimentary things which the gallant perfumer had, no doubt, written to her.

But, meanwhile, M. Fanfan, ardently desirous of obtaining his prize, was crawling about under the table in search of it, when he suddenly perceived a beautiful ribbon upon a lady's lap. He did not doubt for a moment that this was the garter of which he was in quest, and hastily seizing the ribbon, which was rolled up with care,

he issued from under the table, crying at the top of his voice, "Here is the bride's garter. I have the bride's garter."

"That's very strange," said Madame Moutonnet. "She must have put it on herself."

"Let us see the garter," cried all the company.

Little Fanfan unrolled his ribbon, was pricked by the pin, asked why they put pins in garters, and at last found the note.

"Wait; there's a paper," said Fanfan.

"A paper!" cried the ladies.

"Yes, and a written paper," said Mademoiselle Cécile, maliciously.

"O good Heavens! it is my belt," said the blond lady to her neighbor. "Monsieur, you have compromised me."

"Goodness! it is my declaration," said the perfumer. "Fortunately, it is not signed, and my pen was so horrible I hope my writing will not be recognized."

"My daughter, is this ribbon yours?" demanded Madame Moutonnet, severely.

"No, madame," replied Eugénie; "it is not mine."

"Besides, it is not a garter; it is a belt. Do you see, ladies?"

"That is right," said the ladies; "it is a belt."

"But whose is it?"

"It is not mine," "Nor mine," repeated all the ladies, feeling their belts.

Gérard's neighbor answered with the rest, pretending to feel her waist, which was concealed by her napkin.

"Let us see what is on the paper," said everyone.

"I will read it to you," said Dupont. "I expect it is another wedding stanza."

"No, I will sing it to you," cried Gérard, approaching the husband and snatching the paper from his hands. He opened the note and pretended to read: —

"Marriage is a charming bond,
When love intoxicates."

"What! is that all?" said Dupont.

"Absolutely all," said the perfumer, tearing the note and throwing it into the fire. "It's a distich."

"It seems to me that it does not rhyme."

"It is blank verse."

"What! you call that blank verse?"

"I bet it is what I make all day without intending to."

"None the less, it's a very pretty thought," said Madame Moutonnet.

"It smells horribly of tube-rose," said Bidois.

The sound of the clarinet and the violins put an end to this conversation, fortunately for the perfumer, whom Bidois' reflection had somewhat embarrassed. Everyone rose and prepared to

dance. The blond lady remained at the table last of all. "They might notice that I have no belt," she said, "and draw their own inferences."

"Pretend to be indisposed," said the perfumer. "Ask one of the servants to unlace you; then it will be presumed that you have taken off your belt." Madame Dufour — that was the pretty blonde's name — followed Gérard's advice, and went into a little side-room to feign indisposition. The dancing began; everyone brightened up; Eugénie alone refused all the invitations offered her, pleading a violent headache; Dupont tried in vain to draw her upon the floor. "She is too excited and too nervous," said Madame Moutonnet. "Marriage has an astonishing effect upon her."

"It is fortunate," said Bidois, under his breath, "that it has not that effect on all the young ladies who marry."

Dupont made the best of it and danced for two. His trinkets and coins rattled. He had decided to have as much fun as possible, even to the bursting again of his breeches, if such a sacrifice were necessary.

"But what has become of Madame Dufour?" asked Mademoiselle Cécile, who noticed all that went on.

"She was not well," replied one of the servants, "and a gentleman who is very highly scented is taking care of her."

All the people who did not dance went to assist Madame Dufour, who allowed herself to be unlaced and undressed in order to conceal the loss of her belt. M. Gérard had found different pretexts for getting rid of all the servants; and, always in love, always impertinent, he was just about making a declaration of his passion, when several persons entered the side-room to inquire after Madame Dufour, who, by dint of yawning and moaning, had given herself a stomach ache.

Eugénie, always good, always sympathetic, forgot her troubles for a moment to go and offer aid to the invalid; but as she approached the little room she saw several people with Madame Dufour.

"She does not need my care," she said, turning away, and, glancing around, she realized that for the first time in the day she was alone.

"Ah, I can now have a moment of liberty!" murmured the melancholy Eugénie. She entered the little deserted room, seated herself, and there, with no indiscreet witnesses, she let the tears flow which she had stifled since morning. "I am married," she said; "all is over so far as I am concerned. For me there is no longer hope of happiness, and I cannot die. How wearisome will be my life! My dreams of happiness have vanished forever. I must no longer love Adolphe. I must not even think of him; but that is impossible. I must be faithful to my honor. What

"That is true; if I were sure not to soil my stockings—"

"But where has Madame Moutonnet gone?" asked Mademoiselle Cécile, who was not dancing, because no one asked her, and who was occupied in criticising the conduct of those around her.

"There! my mother-in-law has disappeared also," said Dupont.

"It is singular," remarked M. Moutonnet.

"I will go and look for the ladies," cried M. Gérard. "I will bring them back immediately."

So saying, the perfumer hastened to leave the ball, hoping to find the bride alone, and address to her some of the pretty things which he had not had time to say to Madame Dufour.

Meanwhile the dance continued, and Gérard did not come back. "What can that mean?" repeated Mademoiselle Cécile. "Are they all going to act like that?"

The spinster ran from Madame Gérard to the bridegroom, from the bridegroom to Monsieur Moutonnet, trying her best to fill them all with distress and anxiety; but the wife of the perfumer was absorbed in the dance. M. Moutonnet was not sorry at all to have a moment's freedom to do as he pleased, and the bridegroom told Cécile that the bride was with his mother-in-law.

"Did anyone ever see a wedding like this?" murmured Mademoiselle Cécile; "it is positively scandalous."

"If I were certain of not spoiling my stockings," reflected Bidois, stopping before each young lady, and casting one glance at the dancer and another at his legs.

Suddenly a great noise was heard. They cried, "Help! murder!" and even worse.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the bridegroom; "and my wife is not found yet!"

"I told you something extraordinary was passing," said Mademoiselle Cécile; "but no one would listen to me."

All the wedding party ran to the place from whence the cries came. They mounted several stairways, they crossed a part of the house, and came at last to a little dark closet, where Madame Moutonnet was wrangling with one of the scullions. Not far away the perfumer held one of the kitchenmaids in his arms.

Madame Moutonnet, in looking for her daughter, had lost her way in the house. She had mounted and descended several stairways, always calling for Eugénie. Receiving no response, she wished to return to the dance, hoping to find her daughter there; but she had not taken the right direction, and had turned into the dark closet. Now, as everywhere there are love affairs, in the Rue des Martyrs as well as at the Cadran Bleu, between scullions and kitchenmaids, as between Frontins and Martons; as all the world makes love, from the lowest to the highest, from the

richest to the poorest, and there is merely a difference in the manner of making, or, rather, expressing it, — a scullion of the restaurant where the Dupont wedding was being celebrated had a love affair with one of the kitchenmaids, and had arranged to meet her while the company should be taken up with dancing. I do not precisely know for what purpose; that, however, is not our concern. The scullion was the first to reach the dark closet, their place of assignation. He seized hold of a dress, and had no doubt it was that of his sweetheart, because a scullion is not generally skilled in fabrics. He began the conversation with a kiss, at which initiatory process, it can easily be imagined, Madame Moutonnet was perfectly astounded.

On his part, the perfumer was also groping along the corridors; he purposely had not taken a light, feeling that the obscurity would be favorable to him. He went stumbling on for some time without finding anyone, when at last he distinguished the noise of the steps of someone running before him. He ran after her, caught her by the skirts, which proved to him that she was a woman; and, asking no more, he commenced an interview in the same manner as his neighbor, the scullion.

But the kisses were answered by blows, for Madame Moutonnet was a dragon of virtue, and when she had recovered from her surprise she resumed

all her wonted energy. The kitchenmaid did likewise, because, though not exactly a dragon of virtue, she was faithful to her scullion; and the odor of jasmine and heliotrope having no connection with those which her lover habitually exhaled, she did not doubt that there was some mistake.

Cries and blows followed the kisses. The entire wedding party was aroused, and appeared on the scene. As soon as the light illuminated the features of Madame Moutonnet, the scullion fled, without waiting to be driven; and Gérard, startled, let the servant go.

"It must be confessed," said Madame Moutonnet to the proprietor, "that you have bold fellows in your employ. The wretch! If no one had come! One is not safe in your closets."

"And you, Monsieur Gérard," asked his wife, — "what were you doing with this girl?"

"My faith!" cried Gérard, "I thought it was a thief, and I wanted to stop him."

"A thief in skirts!"

"But listen to me; it was dark; he might have been disguised."

They seemed to believe the perfumer's mistake, and returned to the ballroom, where they found the bride, who, having heard the hubbub, had left her retreat to join the company.

"Ah, here is the bride whom we have been looking for," exclaimed Dupont, approaching Eugénie. "Ah, what a pleasant time we have been

having! How have you enjoyed yourself, my sweet? How do you feel?"

"Always the same, monsieur," said Eugénie. She looked at the clock, and sighed as she noticed the hour.

Dupont noticed it, and approaching her ear said in soft accents, —

"Night comes on apace, sweet bride."

"Ah, how long the time seems to me!" replied Eugénie.

"In sooth, you are too kind; I quite share your impatience."

Eugénie looked at him in amazement, not understanding a word of what he said; while Dupont went away, rubbing his hands and saying to himself sotto voce, "I bet that love makes her head ache. That woman adores me."

At last they proposed the closing dance, — the Gothic Boulangère, — which, instead of terminating a ball, often prolongs it an hour more. It is a very agreeable dance, no doubt, where persons already fatigued by the exercise of the evening exhaust themselves utterly by turning an hour to the same refrain, pausing only to see a dancer run after each lady or gentleman in the figure, and make them do the German to the left as quickly as possible, after which the individual who has gone the rounds returns to his place, breathless, and dripping with perspiration. The Boulangère is truly a very pretty dance.

Eugénie could not be excused from taking part. She was drawn into the circle, she was forced to turn, pass and whirl; and the young woman, stunned by the noise, the songs and the laughter, let herself be led, hardly knowing what she was about. The Boulangère only lasted an hour and a quarter. This is not long when there are forty people in the dance; for it is varied by little incidents which constitute its charm, and add to the amusement of the company. M. Moutonnet lost his wig; Mademoiselle Cécile, her garters; Madame Moutonnet tore her dress; Madame Gérard fell; her husband rolled on the floor with his partner; Bidois soiled his stockings; and the bridegroom split his breeches again, but this time not in front.

They stopped at last, exhausted, overcome, covered with perspiration and dust; and Dupont exclaimed louder than ever, "Ah, Heavens! what a good time we are having!"

But already the uncles have seized the aunts, and the young men their young lady cousins; all thought of going home.

Madame Moutonnet approached her son-in-law and whispered in his ear in a tone at once tender and mysterious, "The moment has arrived; you may retire."

"I understand you, mother-in-law," responded the grocer with a knowing smile; "I understand you."

The bridegroom hastened toward the bride; he took her hand and led her away. Eugénie allowed herself to be conducted to the carriage without a word.

"Home, — Rue aux Ours!" cried Dupont, and the horses sped away with the newly married pair. For the first time since they were married the two were alone together. This moment is the happiest of the day for a young couple who love each other, and who are eager to be alone, so that they may show their tenderness freely for each other.

But for Eugénie and her husband it was different. The young woman began to dread the danger to which she had not given a thought during the day, as she believed nothing could possibly augment her sad misfortune. But a young girl, the most innocent as well as the wisest, knows very well that when she marries her husband will have rights over her; the instant when she has to surrender herself to this new master makes the heart of the young maiden palpitate with fear, even when she loves the man to whom she has bound herself. What then must be the feelings of her who has given herself over to a man whom she detests? Eugénie withdrew to the farthest corner of the carriage. Her husband seated himself respectfully before her; but then, seeing that his wife occupied a very small space, he moved to her side, and Eugénie withdrew still farther into her corner. They said nothing. Eugénie had nothing to say,

and the husband did not exactly know how to commence the conversation. He was a little afraid of Eugénie. With her he dared not jest; but presently he took courage and decided to speak.

"Our wedding has been a very gay one. What do you think of it, dear bride?"

"Yes, monsieur; everyone seemed to enjoy it."

"The dinner was very fine. Everyone ate a great deal. Didn't you think so, dearest? I gave orders to the restaurateur to see to that."

"Yes, monsieur."

"My breeches are torn again. I don't believe I can wear them any more. At least they would have to be patched. I don't know that it is worth the trouble, although it is the very finest of cloth. Do you think you could mend breeches, sweetheart?"

"I will try, monsieur."

"She's a charming woman," said Dupont to himself; "she will mend my breeches. That is what I call having a good education. How very submissive she is! She says little, but to the point."

Dupont moved nearer to his wife, who still withdrew from him as far as possible. He again took courage, and seized her hand, which Eugénie snatched from him immediately.

"Peste!" said Dupont to himself; "she will be shy to the last moment, I declare; but I suppose that is the result of her good education.

Anyway, she is my wife. I have a perfect right to—"

"Marriage is a fine thing," remarked Dupont, after a moment.

Eugénie's only response was a sigh.

"Especially when people love each other as we do."

Eugénie again sighed and was silent.

"How happy we shall be!"

Eugénie sighed again, still more deeply, and said nothing.

"Good Heavens!" cried Dupont, alarmed by these repeated sighs; "has your dinner disagreed with you?"

"No, monsieur."

"Oh, I was afraid — you sigh so much, I was afraid you might be suffering; but I think you share my own feelings, dear bride."

Eugénie put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"She is very much moved; it is the effect of modesty," said Dupont. "I think a kiss will be a very good beginning. Being her husband, I shall have robbed her of nothing. It will certainly make her less timid."

And Dupont at once tried to kiss Eugénie; but she collected all her strength and pushed him away with such force that he fell on the straw between the two seats, with his legs and arms in the air. "She certainly is shy," said the poor grocer, "but it is her education." Having decided to have a

kiss, the grocer again tried to obtain one, and again Eugénie repulsed him; while he, fully persuaded that her resistance was only the effect of her training, and that ultimately she would be delighted to yield, was about to obtain his desire, when the carriage stopped in the Rue aux Ours.

Dupont leaped from the carriage and helped the bride, who could hardly walk and was trembling like an aspen, to alight, and led her into her new home. Eugénie, exhausted by the exertion she had undergone, could scarcely breathe, and it seemed to her as if she would die as she entered her room. A woman awaited her there; she ran to her; it was Jeanneton. Eugénie recognized her and shrieked. "Save me!" she exclaimed, as she fell fainting into the girl's arms.

"Ah, my poor Eugénie!" cried Jeanneton; "in what a state do I find you! See, monsieur, she's dying; she has lost consciousness."

"O mon Dieu! do you believe so?" cried Dupont, as he aided Jeanneton to lay Eugénie upon her bed. "But why is it? It's very singular; I only tried to kiss her. Is that what you call a nervous attack?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes; it's exactly that. You know she has them often."

"Do you think this attack will last long?"

"A week or more, monsieur."

"A week! The devil! that's very awkward. What's to be done, Jeanneton?"

"Let me take care of her, monsieur; I'll watch her all night. I know what is to be done in such cases. Go to bed, and I will look after madame."

"Devil take it! It is very exasperating," said Dupont, glancing at Eugénie, whose eyes were fast closed. "I expected something so very different. You'll confess, Jeanneton, it's very disappointing to have your wife ill the night of your marriage."

"O monsieur! that's a fine way to talk when your wife is dying!"

"Oh, I can see very well that her eyes are closed. What the devil! To be sure, I love nervous women, but I hope the attacks will not come often. Mother-in-law should have told me."

"Would a mother tell that, monsieur, when she wished to get her daughter married?"

"You're right; she wouldn't tell it."

"Poor little thing! It isn't her fault. Go to bed, monsieur; leave her to me."

"Well, I believe that's the best thing I can do. Watch her well, Jeanneton, and if she gets better during the night, come and fetch me."

"Yes, monsieur; I'll do so without fail."

The husband took a light and started regretfully for his room. He went to bed cursing the nervous attack, and spent the first night of his honeymoon in snoring. He did not awake until late the next morning.

As soon as her husband was safely out of the way Eugénie recovered consciousness, followed by

the singular good fortune which allows nervous women to regain their faculties as soon as circumstances are favorable.

"Has he gone?" demanded the young wife, not daring to open her eyes.

"Yes, yes, mamzelle — mada — dear Eugénie."

"Call me that always, Jeanneton, but never, never Madame Dupont, I pray you."

"Surely. Don't be afraid that I shall pronounce that name; I never shall."

"Has he really gone?"

"Yes, yes; he has gone to bed. Besides, to be doubly sure, I have double-locked the door."

"Bolt it too, Jeanneton."

"I would if there were any bolts. But don't worry; he won't come. I told him you'd be ill at least a week."

"O Jeanneton, how much I owe you! I shall not forget how you have saved me. But in a week?"

"Well, it will be difficult then, for you see he is your husband — he has a right —"

"Never, never, Jeanneton! I swear it. I would rather die. They wished me to marry him, and they forced me to do it. They can go no further."

"Oh, he knows well enough that your parents can say nothing to you. But do you believe that a man marries a pretty young girl to — Oh, no; that's contrary to custom."

"I am his wife. I can never more be anything to Adolphe. Is not that misfortune enough? Ah, Jeanneton, if you knew — That ugly man — coming home in the carriage, he wished — he dared to try to kiss me. I defended myself — I repulsed him — but, alas! my strength abandoned me; he made fun of my prayers, my tears. Happily, just then the carriage stopped. Ah, Jeanneton, I could not support another scene like that. But you are here; you will be near me; oh, I shall fear nothing now, dear Jeanneton; you will never leave me again — will you?"

"You know that I ask nothing better than to stay with you; I'd give my life to know that you were happy."

"Happy! Alas, Jeanneton! that is impossible now, even in thought. Those sweet dreams, those charming plans which I made that night in your room, when we spoke of him, must all be forgotten. I am the wife of another. Do you see how unhappy I am? And Adolphe, — perhaps some day he also will forget his vows — his Eugénie. I shall have no right to accuse him; but he will love someone else. Ah, Jeanneton, that idea is insupportable."

"Come, come; don't cry so, mamzelle. Ugh! good Heavens — these men!"

Jeanneton stopped; she felt she had almost said too much; why should she rend Eugénie's heart by telling her that Adolphe had already

been unfaithful to her? Was she not sufficiently unhappy? It would be better to let her cherish the memory of her lover, as one tender and constant. Jeanneton felt all that, and was silent. The most delicate consideration is as often exhibited by a loving, simple servant as by the most faithful friend. Only a sensitive heart is needed for such things.

"But by what chance, what good luck, are you here in this house?" asked Eugénie; and Jeanneton related to her what she had done, and how she had presented herself to M. Dupont.

"I thought you would not be sorry to find me here, and so I ventured to come without asking your permission."

"Dear Jeanneton, your presence will enable me to support life. I should die of sorrow were I here alone, and if you are with me I can feel that I have not lost everything. I can still sometimes speak of — But, now I am married, can I still speak of him? Perhaps it is a sin."

"Oh, gracious! I can't say as to that; but while you do nothing more than to speak of him, it can't be such a great crime. There are a good many husbands who would like to be sure that their wives were only unfaithful in speech. But listen: to make sure of it, don't you speak of him to me; but I will speak of him to you."

"That's it, Jeanneton; and you will speak of him often — won't you?"

"Certainly; that is, when I am sure that it will give you pleasure."

"Ah, you may always talk about him, then. Poor fellow! if he knew — Do you believe he knows that I am married?"

"No, mamzelle; M. Adolphe is not in Paris at present. He was called away by the illness of his father, and I am sure he is not yet returned."

"Poor young man! And when he returns — ah, Jeanneton, he will die!"

"No, mamzelle; I assure you he will not die, for you have not died."

"He will blame me; he will curse me, perhaps."

"Is he your father? Is he your mother? Wait, wait; after all, if he had been so afraid of losing you, he should not have gone away just at the moment when he ought to marry you."

"But I was not to be married for a month. They advanced the date, no doubt, the better to deceive Adolphe. Besides, he had to go and care for his father, Jeanneton. And you blame him! You blame him for being a good son!"

"No, mamzelle, I don't blame him; but, you see, I know that men don't know how to love as women do; they are more fortunate than we."

"And I was looking for him all along the way. And I expected to see him everywhere. Alas! I shall not see him any more — shall I, Jeanneton?"

"Goodness! you might meet somewhere."

"Yes; but where could I meet him? I do not wish to go out; I shall stay here, always alone with you. Listen, Jeanneton; this is the plan I have formed. M. Dupont is my husband, and, as my husband, I owe him consideration and respect. I shall thank him for what he has done for me, in restoring my good Jeanneton to me. I will show him all due gratitude; but as for love —when a man marries a girl in spite of herself, when he has led her to the altar in tears, has he a right to demand more of her? No, he has not. Well, since he cannot exact love from me, he cannot exact anything; he cannot wish that—"

"Oh, do not trust to that. Remember, he has already tried to kiss you in spite of yourself."

"What, Jeanneton! One must endure such things as that when there is no love? Ah, the idea! I will never consent to that,—never!"

"But, mamzelle, a husband is the master."

"The master! Say now, Jeanneton, is my father the master in our house?"

"Yes, mamzelle; but in truth Madame Moutonnet is the mistress, and sometimes the mistress plays the master."

"Ah, I do not wish to be either the one or the other; I do not wish to command here; and still I have the right—have I not, Jeanneton?"

"Certainly, mamzelle."

"But I shall not use it. I shall be very submissive, except in the one particular that you

know; as to that, my resolution is thoroughly fixed. I have given my hand, but I have not given my heart. My heart is Adolphe's. Alas! he will have only that. I will maintain my honor, respect the bond which binds me; but I will be faithful also to him whom my heart has chosen."

"But, mamzelle, once more I tell you that this cannot be, that you cannot arrange it with your husband, and he will exact—"

"O Jeanneton, I must try to prevent that, and I count upon your zeal and friendship to help me. You will find the means to save me, I am sure."

"Well, that won't be so easy as you think."

"You did it today."

"Ah, yes, it will pass for once. But the next time it will be more difficult. We shall see, however; we have some time to plan, at least you can sleep in peace tonight, and afterward we shall see."

CHAPTER IV

Dupont's Visit To His Mother-in-law

Upon awakening on the morning after his marriage, Dupont was mightily amused at finding himself alone in his bed.

"I wager that everybody thinks I slept with my bride," he said to himself. "How surprised they would be if they knew that I did nothing of the sort. It is rather droll to sleep alone on your wedding night, and I certainly did not expect it at all, but these accidents happen sometimes. My poor wife unfortunately suffers so from severe nervous attacks. It was a great pity however, that she should have one so soon after our wedding. I lost my head a little in the carriage, I am afraid; I felt so furiously in love, and, in fact, I became terribly impertinent. Hang it! I was like a little lion. Well, after all it's only a delayed engagement. There is a lifetime before us. I will get up now and go and inquire after my wife's health."

Dupont rose leisurely and dressed, and then he went to his wife's apartment; but just as he was about to enter the room he encountered the worthy Jeanneton.

"Oh, how is my wife this morning?" asked the bridegroom of the maid.

"So, so, monsieur; she is asleep now, but the night has been terrible."

"Terrible! O good Heavens! the poor little thing! Do you think it will be all over by to-night?"

"Tonight, monsieur? How can you think so? After such a violent crisis she will certainly be ill for a week, perhaps longer if she has a relapse."

"You make me tremble, Jeanneton. It is very exasperating, for we don't get married in order that the one can sleep in honey and the other in pepper. Do you understand me?"

"O Heavens, monsieur! have you not plenty of time? Life is long; you are still young."

"Yes, of course I am young; that's the trouble; if I were old I should not so much mind."

"No, monsieur; but, gracious! you can't prevent a woman from being ill."

"No, but one can try to cure her; I'll go for the doctor, Jeanneton."

"Oh, monsieur, what's the good of that? The doctors don't know anything about nervous attacks. It's such a funny illness; it takes you all of a sudden, and then it's gone before you know it. The best thing for your wife is that you should never oppose her; it doesn't do to contradict a nervous woman; that brings on an attack quicker than anything."

"Oh, well, then, you can be easy; for I shall not oppose her. Heavens! I shall be very careful about that. But perhaps a physician could tell me if—"

"Oh, monsieur, with orange-flower water, and ether, and Hoffmann's drops, I'm just as skilful as a physician. The proof of this is that, when madame was with her mother, and when I was there, they never called a physician."

"And you say it is contagious, Jeanneton?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur; one catches it if one sleeps with such a patient."

"Then I will wait until she is perfectly cured."

"You will do well, monsieur."

"But I shall go to see my mother-in-law, and I shall ask her why she concealed her daughter's illness from me."

"Yes, monsieur; and do you know what Madame Moutonnet will say to you?"

"No, I'm sure I don't know."

"Well, I'm very well acquainted with Madame Moutonnet, and she will tell you that you don't know what you are talking about. She will declare that her daughter is just like everybody else."

"I don't see how she can say that."

"Do you think a mother will confess such things? No, monsieur; she is capable of saying that her daughter never had a nervous attack. You know very well that isn't true, because you've

witnessed those attacks more than once before you were married; and you were perfectly free then not to take mamzelle for your wife. But I remember very well what you said; you said that you liked such a woman as that."

"Yes, yes; it might do once in a while,—I might have said that,— but it's quite different when it lasts for a week."

Dupont went out in rather a bad humor, and hastened to Madame Moutonnet's house. He found her taking breakfast with her husband and Bidois.

"Oh, how are you this morning, son-in-law?" said Papa Moutonnet, with a roguish air.

"I'm very well, father; I'm exceedingly well," answered Dupont.

"Look at him, my heart. How proud he is! Doesn't he look satisfied?" continued M. Moutonnet, somewhat mischievously. "He is really rosy!—and after the first night! That first night is a very pretty thing—is it not, my heart? Do you remember?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes; I remember sometimes."

"Ah, Dupont, did the bride look up at you this morning? Was she thoughtful, and a little embarrassed? Madame Moutonnet, you were very interesting at that moment."

"That is easy to believe," said Bidois, bowing to the lace dealer's wife, who modestly lowered her eyes.

"Be quiet, Monsieur Moutonnet; you make me blush."

"But why, my sweetheart? It is very natural to think of those things the day after a wedding. It is sweet — is it not, Dupont?"

"Oh, yes; it is sweet," answered the grocer, looking somewhat sour.

"He certainly acts queerly," said the old clerk, regarding somewhat maliciously the bridegroom, who did not know how to explain himself.

"Well, son-in-law, you say nothing; has pleasure deprived you of speech?"

"No, father-in-law; it certainly has deprived me of nothing."

"But you have a strange expression," said Madame Moutonnet in her turn; "it seems to me that in your place I should be gayer, more joyful."

"I should be very joyful if — well — But, after all, I have no reason to be very satisfied. You understand that when one knows what I know —"

"What does that mean? And what do you know, if you please?"

"I know that my wife — your daughter — my spouse, in fact, is subject to a certain thing — Really, mother-in-law, you should have told me that before. The devil! I would have made my reflections. When I buy coffee I want to know whether it is mocha or martinique, and when I buy bitter almonds I do not sell them for sweet."

"Pray explain yourself more clearly, my son. What connection is there between my daughter and almonds?"

"You understand me very well, mother; and you can see that it is disagreeable to be married — and — and — not to be married."

"Do you comprehend what he is talking about, Bidois?"

"Not at all, madame."

"I see a great deal of smoke and very little fire," remarked M. Moutonnet.

"As for me, father, I see nothing but smoke; and when one marries one expects something else."

"Monsieur Dupont, do you know that I begin to be a little impatient?" said Madame Moutonnet.

"Zounds, mother! if this continues I shall not consider it amusing, I assure you."

"What hinders your relations with your wife?"

"Her condition; it is very simple; her invalid state, if you like that better."

"My daughter is ill?"

"By Jove, I should rather think so! She has had a terrible crisis, that may last a week."

"A crisis! Of what?"

"Of what? — of what? You know very well of what! But when a young person has a chronic malady, I repeat to you, madame, it is only fair to inform people of it."

"A chronic malady! My daughter! Have you lost your head, Monsieur Dupont? My daughter is very well, Monsieur Dupont; she has always been well — do you understand? I have given you a charming wife, and I find you very impertinent to come and tell me now that my daughter has a — a chronic —"

"Ah, I was told that you would not confess it."

"Monsieur Dupont, do not turn my head with your nonsense, I beg of you."

"It is enough, mother-in-law; I will be silent. I hope, however, that this will not last forever. Still, if it is not contagious —"

"Contagious! What do you mean?"

"My wife's illness, — her nervous attacks."

"Once more you are a fool. If my daughter is not well today, rest assured it is nothing."

"Very well, mother-in-law; I will return to my wife."

Dupont quitted his new parents, whom he left quite dissatisfied with him, and much surprised at what he had told them. Bidois alone suspected that there might be under all this some ruse invented by the bride.

The grocer returned home. After he had spent some time in the shop, he went upstairs to his young wife and knocked softly on her door, which Eugénie herself opened. Dupont was agreeably surprised to find that his wife had risen, supposing her unable to leave her bed. He studied her

for some moments in silence; it seemed to him a great pity such a pretty woman should be so extremely delicate. Eugénie wore a simple house dress. There was no pretension in her toilet, nor in the arrangement of her hair. Her locks were caught back by a shell comb, and clustered in ringlets about her forehead; her morning dress came up to the throat, and covered closely her exceedingly lovely figure. The features of the young woman showed the depression which still possessed her, but in spite of her melancholy Eugénie was charming; she pleased without intending to, while others fail after every resource of the toilet has been exhausted.

Eugénie courtesied very respectfully to her husband, and then took her seat again. This embarrassed Dupont, who, in spite of himself, was obliged to maintain a ceremonious attitude toward his wife. At length he took a chair and drew it toward her.

"How are you this morning, my dear?" he said.

"Thank you, monsieur, I am a little better."

"Jeanneton tells me that last night you had a terrible attack, consequently —"

"Yes, monsieur. This good girl has taken such care of me. Oh, I thank you very much that I am able to keep her in my service."

"Why, my dear, I shall always be charmed to please you. Then she's a good cook, and I believe she is an excellent person."

"I can assure you of her fidelity."

"I was very sorry to have caused you any trouble, and I hope you will soon be entirely recovered."

Eugénie dropped her eyes and sat silent.

"If you feel a little better, my dear, would you please go down to the shop for a few moments?"

"Why do you wish that, monsieur?"

"So that you may learn the prices. You know a pretty woman is very attractive behind a counter — people come in to drink a little glass, and —"

"Oh, I shall not go down, monsieur."

"Did I understand you, my dear?"

"I say, monsieur, that I shall not go down."

"Oh, I see you do not feel well; you are suffering."

"That is not the reason, monsieur. I have no taste for your business. I love to be alone, and I shall remain in my apartment."

"What, madame! you do not wish to help me in the shop?"

"No, monsieur."

"Oh, I am sure that this is only a little pleasantry."

"I am not in a humor to make jokes, monsieur."

"The devil! My wife, they ought to have told me that before I married you."

"Did you ask me, monsieur?"

"No, that is true; but I supposed that an obedient young girl —"

"Oh, monsieur, I showed that I was obedient."

"But, mademoiselle, I married so as to have a woman in my shop."

"And I, monsieur, married in obedience to my parents."

"It is customary to obey your husband also, madame."

"I shall always do so, when I feel that I can, monsieur."

"And you feel that you cannot come down to my shop?"

"No, monsieur; for I am sure that I should die of weariness and sorrow."

"Very well; that's a nice state of things. But we shall see, madame; we shall see. I shall ask my mother-in-law about this," said Dupont, and he left his wife's apartment in a very bad humor; "things are taking an extremely disagreeable turn."

The grocer took his hat and hastened away to Madame Moutonnet, who was just about to sit down to dinner with her husband and Bidois.

"Oh, here is our son-in-law," said Papa Moutonnet. "I wager that now he comes to thank us for the treasure we have given him."

"I was quite sure he would turn over a new leaf," said Madame Moutonnet.

"I don't know about a new leaf," said Bidois;

"but he is as red as a lobster, and I should imagine he is angry."

"Sit down," said Madame Moutonnet to Dupont, who took a chair and stifled his sighs, "and tell us what has brought you over this evening."

"I have not come on a very agreeable errand," he said; "and in fact you see a man who is extremely vexed."

"What! vexed? Did you say vexed, Monsieur Dupont? Do you understand that, Monsieur Moutonnet?"

"My heart, I understand that he is vexed, and that is all."

"I shall try to make myself understood. I wish you to know that my wife is already acting in a very strange fashion."

"Do I understand you? Have you come again to complain about your wife? This morning it was her health; this evening it is her conduct. You were only married yesterday, and you are already accusing your wife. O Monsieur Dupont! I did not expect this on your part."

"But, mother, I tell you what it is. My wife refuses to go down into the shop."

"She refuses to do that?"

"Yes, madame, and very positively. She said it sweetly, I confess; but I saw very well that she meant what she said, and that she does not intend to help me in the shop, and I wish that she shall do it."

"You wish! you wish! That doesn't sound very amiable, dear son-in-law. Do you intend to play the tyrant in your own house?"

"What do you mean by 'tyrant,' mother-in-law?"

"I wish that my daughter should imitate her mother; that she should be mistress in her own home; it is very simple. You asked her of me; I gave her to you. Now you are married, and the rest does not concern me at all. As to Eugénie, when she was with me, naturally, she obeyed me; but, now she is married, she prefers to command her own household. When a young woman has received an education like that which has been given my daughter, when she has had principles and examples of wisdom instilled into her, when she has been taught virtue, she cannot conduct herself wrongly. Remember that, Monsieur Dupont."

"But still, madame —"

"No, my son-in-law, no. A husband ought never to complain of his wife. If Eugénie does not wish to go into your shop, she has, no doubt, good reasons for her decision."

"She cannot possibly have good reasons."

"You know nothing about it, my dear sir. Women should never be expected to account for themselves to their husbands. On the contrary, husbands should depend upon the clearer perceptions of their wives."

"But, madame—"

"That is enough, Monsieur Dupont. I tell you that you are wrong. Let this experience be a lesson to you in the future, and let me remind you that I have given you a treasure."

"I am very much obliged, madame," said the bridegroom, as he took his hat. He bowed to his father-in-law and to Bidois, and returned home, saying to himself, "Well, if she won't come into the shop I shall have to let it pass; and, as my mother-in-law assures me that I have a treasure, no doubt I shall be very happy in the end. I am certain of one thing,—she's very much in love with me, and that's something."

Dupont tried to fortify himself with these reflections. He was convinced that Eugénie adored him, and that the ceremonious tone which she preserved toward him was due to the education she had received.

A week rolled away. During this time the bridegroom only saw his wife for a few moments in the day and at meal times. He inquired carefully after Eugénie's health, and Jeanneton did her best to make him believe that his wife was still very ill; but Eugénie was not good at pretence, and, although she was always sorrowful, always plunged in melancholy memories and regrets, she had recovered her strength somewhat, and was not so pale as on the day of her marriage.

"You needn't talk to me about my wife's

health," said Dupont to his servant. "She's a great deal better. In fact, it seems to me she is well."

"Don't trust to that, monsieur. It's a very insidious evil. It lingers, and is apt to break forth at any time."

"Well, it might linger in that way for a year. I shall do my best to take care of my wife's health, Jeanneton; but I do not consider her an invalid any longer."

M. Dupont determined to tell his wife that he was not willing to live with her always in their present relations.

Eugénie passed most of her time in her room, where she busied herself with her needle. Sometimes she sat at her window, which opened upon the thoroughfare; but she remained there a very short time, for it appeared to her that all the people in the street looked at her. It seemed to her as though among the crowd must be someone who was looking for her, who was burning to see her. She feared to see him; nevertheless her eager eyes scanned only strange people; then she turned sadly from the window, saying, "I shall never see him again." In vain Jeanneton often said to her mistress that she must go out and get some exercise and fresh air, that if she remained constantly shut up in her room she would really fall ill in the end. "What difference does it make?" said Eugénie; "I am sure I have not much happiness in life."

Dupont found his wife sunk in a profound melancholy. At sight of her husband, Eugénie rose, courtesied low, and gave him a chair.

"She is extremely polite," said the grocer to himself. "I suppose it is because of her good education. If she would only go into the shop— But I mustn't speak of that now."

"Your health seems to be very much better, my dear wife," said Dupont, putting on a sentimental air, which he thought would please Eugénie.

"Yes, monsieur; I feel much better."

"I am delighted. I am very happy to hear that. I have been very impatient for your return to health."

"Why is that, monsieur?"

"What! why? But for — My sweet wife, it is a week since we were married."

"Oh, I have not forgotten it, monsieur; that day will never be effaced from my memory, you may be sure."

"Ah, really you are very good, and I am penetrated by your sentiments. But that is not enough; and, my love — you feel that my love cannot be content with the distance at which we live. I flatter myself that this night will not resemble others. You comprehend, Madame Dupont?"

"No, monsieur."

"I will explain myself better this evening; and

I hope that the shepherd's hour, when — the star of Venus — in fact, I shall not — "

"What, monsieur! you wish to change our manner of living?"

"But, my dear wife, should not we live together according to ancient usage? Does your heart not prompt you to that?"

"My heart! Oh, no, monsieur; you have never understood my heart."

"Oh, I comprehend; that is on account of your education and your extreme innocence; but I shall know how to make this little heart speak."

"Monsieur, it shall be my first duty to satisfy you in all things; but I warn you that I shall change nothing in our present manner of life. Let us continue to live separately. We shall see each other during the day, whenever that is agreeable to you, and I shall always have for you the respect and regard one owes to a husband; but do not think of any more intimate relationship, because I will never consent to it."

"I hope, madame, that you do not know what you are talking about. Do you think people get married simply to take breakfast and dinner together? Besides, my dear wife, when people love each other as you and I do, even innocence should not make a person so shy as you are. Heavens! it is well enough to educate young ladies strictly, but this is going a little too far."

"Yes, monsieur, I believe that when people

love each other nothing which love prompts can be denied; but I have never loved you. You know that very well. I married you against my own wishes, and through simple obedience to my parents; and you have no right to demand from me sentiments which I never felt for you and never have shown you."

"Well, well! This is news, I must say! You mean to say you don't love me, madame?"

"No, monsieur."

"You are not the least bit smitten with me?"

"Oh, no, monsieur; not at all."

"Well, you certainly have acted like it, madame."

"Why, I assure you, monsieur, I never have."

"And I tell you that you have made eyes at me,—actually made eyes at me. And how do you dare to tell me this, after I have been married to you for a week."

"Oh, monsieur, I should have liked very much to say it before, but I never had a chance."

"All this is very agreeable for me, madame; but at least we are married, and a wife ought always to love her husband. Whatever has gone before, it is your duty now to love me and obey me, as a wife should."

"I am very sorry, monsieur, but that will never be."

"We will see about that, madame."

"I will see my mother-in-law once more," said

Dupont, "for I discover that this little woman, although she makes very pretty courtesies, is exceedingly stubborn. I can't understand why she doesn't love me, and I shall compel my mother-in-law to explain that to me."

Dupont went off in a great rage; and Jeanneton, who had heard the discussion between the married couple, scolded her mistress because she had spoken so frankly.

"You must use a little tact, madame," she said. "Just pretend to be a little delicate, and we can keep out of his way."

"But, Jeanneton, he cannot fail to discover the truth, and then you know I cannot bear to say what is untrue. I would rather tell him immediately what I think. Then, at least, he will not torment me any more."

"Do you think so? I am afraid he will become still more obstinate, and we shall find it troublesome to get ourselves out of this new difficulty."

Meanwhile Dupont reached his father-in-law's house, where he had not been seen for several days; and Bidois said to himself, as he saw the grocer's face, "Now we shall learn something new."

"Oh, I am delighted to see you, mother," said Dupont, seating himself near the counter where Madame Moutonnet and her husband were placed.

"Welcome, my son; I am sure that your home is like a turtle-dove's nest by this time."

"I'll wager that it is, my heart," said Papa Moutonnet; "I can see by Dupont's air that he is enchanted with his little wife."

"Do you think so, dear father? I don't know about that. It seems to me we have a greater resemblance to a dog and cat. I came to speak to you about my wife. Up to the present, we are very much like salt and pepper."

"It seems to me, my dear son, that you are difficult to please."

"Yes, difficult,—that is it! One would have to be of a singular nature to accommodate himself to so intractable a woman as my wife. Listen, madame. Anyone would have said, on your daughter's wedding-day, that she was a very obedient and submissive young lady; but I am obliged to complain of her for exactly the contrary qualities."

"Indeed, my dear, you seem to be constantly complaining; but explain yourself, for I do not understand."

"Well, to speak frankly, madame, my wife is a tiger."

"My daughter a tiger! Monsieur Moutonnet, did you ever imagine anything like that? Have you ever seen any quality of that sort in our daughter?"

"No, my angel,—never."

"And you, Bidois?"

"She is a lamb, madame, — a lamb."

"And monsieur dares to call her a tiger."

"But, dear mother, please understand me. I meant to say a tiger for modesty."

"Very well, monsieur; and that is what you complain of. This is something new. A modest woman should assure the repose of her husband, and yet monsieur complains."

"But, mamma, if you will but listen to me. My wife is modest undoubtedly, and I am charmed with her; but it seems to me that she should be more approachable, and that she should permit me —"

"Be silent, be silent, Monsieur Dupont! What are you talking to me about? Please have some reserve in your disclosures."

"Indeed, dear mother-in-law, things cannot remain as they are. I wanted a wife for good and all, and not simply someone who would drop me courtesies and offer me a chair when I go into her presence. Besides, madame, she has told me that she does not love me, that she has never loved me; while you led me to believe that she adored me; all of which is very disagreeable."

"Do you mean to say, monsieur, that you expect to be adored by your wife? What strange idea is this that you have got into your head? The happiest households are not those where one is adored, dear son."

"But surely, dear mother, people usually make a little pretence of it, and do not say such disagreeable things openly."

"I really think you are losing your strength of mind, my dear Dupont. The wife I gave you is a sweet, modest girl, who received an excellent education."

"Oh, well, as far as education is concerned, I have nothing to say."

"Well, monsieur, what are you complaining of? Make your wife happy, and don't come here to puzzle our heads with strange stories."

"I am certain," said M. Moutonnet, "that I don't understand what he is complaining of."

"The thing is very extraordinary," said Bidois with a critical air.

"The thing is very clear to me, I assure you. My wife doesn't give me the rights of a husband."

"And do you come here to complain to us of that?" said Madame Moutonnet. "Are these things any concern of ours? Really, dear son-in-law, at your age one would expect better sense."

"Ask Madame Moutonnet if I have ever called in the neighbors to complain of her," said Monsieur Moutonnet, completing the chorus.

"This is the first time," said Bidois, "that I have ever heard a husband complaining in that way."

"Be sensible, dear son; there are some things which one should keep in the bosom of one's

family. One should never put a finger between the tree and the bark. Don't come here any more, bringing us tales of such follies, or we shall be very much inclined to laugh at you."

"But, mother-in-law —"

"Yes, dear son, we certainly shall be obliged to laugh at you."

"Oh, they will laugh at me — will they?" said Dupont, and he left his mother-in-law's house quite raging with anger. "Well, it is time for me to show whether I have any head or any character. But, since my mother-in-law will not speak to her daughter on this subject, I will see if I cannot make my wife understand that I am her husband."

CHAPTER V

The Serenade

It was midnight. Dupont's shop was promptly closed at exactly eleven o'clock every night, and the grocer's assistants then took their supper and went to bed in a little room adjoining the shop. On this occasion the grocer had made his little plans, and he was only waiting in his room until everybody should be at rest before attempting to visit his wife's chamber, hoping to find her sound asleep, and so gain admission without any trouble.

All day it had been piercing cold, and now the bright, twinkling stars adorned a lovely winter night. Dupont, who was clad only in his underclothing and his dressing-gown, kept near his fire, awaiting the favorable moment for his projected visit, and swallowed several glasses of black currant wine to prevent his taking cold and to fortify his determination.

While drinking his black currant wine and toasting his shins, M. Dupont adorned himself with an enormous cotton nightcap, the point of which seemed to menace the heavens; and, to soften a little the solemnity of its appearance, he

surrounded it with a broad sky-blue ribbon, his favorite color. Drawing the rosette above his right eye, he contemplated himself in his mirror, in order to assume an elegant and graceful carriage. The grocer was perfectly self-satisfied.

"I'm sure I look very well," said he, viewing himself with much complacency in the mirror. "I am really handsome, and I don't see how it is possible that my wife should not find me quite to her liking. I did very wrong this morning to pay attention to what she said. My wife's a child. She doesn't yet understand the sequel of marriage. She has been taught strict principles, and these, as my mother-in-law says, will assure my future tranquillity. Another glass and then I will go to my wife."

Dupont wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, took a candle and slipped softly towards his wife's room. Eugénie, after chatting a long time with Jeanneton, as was her custom, had fallen asleep. The young woman had sent her maid to bed also.

For the first time since her marriage, she dismissed her cares and slept peacefully. A pleasant dream carried her to the woods of Romainville. She was again at the celebration of her father's birthday, that charming day on which Adolphe had told her that he loved her; when, entirely absorbed in their love, they foresaw not the sorrows it would cause them. For them the present

was happiness, the future replete with hopes and delights. That day, so delicious, sped so rapidly away; that time, so sweet, would never more return. But in sleep she lived it all over again. Sleep, poor Eugénie!

Dupont reached his wife's door and tried to open it, but found it was locked on the inside. He had not foreseen this obstacle. "The devil!" he exclaimed; "she has locked herself in. Of course, she's shy. Shall I knock? No, that would wake her up, and I shouldn't have the pleasure of surprising her. Goodness! I will go around by the kitchen, through Jeanneton's room, then through the little passage that leads to my lady's chamber. That's the very thing. Oh, I'm no dullard."

Dupont accordingly turned toward the kitchen, the door of which only closed with a button. He walked on his tiptoes, shading the light with his hand, and entered Jeanneton's chamber, where a prolonged snore announced that the maid neither saw nor heard. In fact, Jeanneton had followed her mistress' example, and had fallen sound asleep, forgetting that she had been placed as an advanced guard, and that the enemy could pass through the kitchen, which was the weak part of the fortress; but we cannot think of everything. Sleep has surprised more than one soldier surrounded by the enemy, and Jeanneton was quite excusable for having yielded to its influence.

"Everything is going beautifully," said Dupont, "and here I am in my wife's room. She's asleep; that's just what I wanted. A woman has no will when she's asleep; but when she's awake, faith! it's quite another thing. She's very pretty, is this little wife of mine. Mother-in-law is right; she is a treasure. But I must put my candle where it will not give too much light."

Dupont placed his taper upon the mantelpiece and returned to Eugénie's bedside. He had laid aside his dressing-gown and was preparing to doff his underclothing, smiling to himself at the surprise he should cause his wife. But what noise was that which suddenly broke the silence of the night, and awakened all the industrious inhabitants of the Rue aux Ours? Violins, clarinets, fifes, hunting-horns, sounded in concert. There was racket and noise enough to break the windows; the crash was even heard in the Boulevard Saint Martin; it echoed and reëchoed. Everyone within its radius was startled and astounded. The passers-by stood petrified, lovers turned pale, the married roared with laughter, and the neighborhood was deafened. Dupont stood dumbfounded. He heard the air "Gayly, gayly, will you marry," which was followed by "Love and Marriage." Other gems succeeded; such as "I Triumph, I am Victor," and "All is Over, I am Married." These songs were accompanied by agreeable variations on the fife and bassdrum, which, in unison

with cries, the vociferations of the musicians and the plaudits of the neighbors, produced altogether a very charming open-air concert.

"Good Heavens! what does that mean?" said Dupont, undecided as to what to do. "What terrible music! Is this a surprise for us? But in any case, I don't see why this concert should keep me out of bed."

But the noise had awakened both Eugénie and Jeanneton. "Madame, madame, do you hear?" cried the servant, to her mistress. "I'll bet my life that they are serenading you."

Eugénie opened her eyes; she saw a man in his shirt beside her bed, and she uttered shriek after shriek. In vain did Dupont try to calm her and reassure her by repeating, —

"It is I, dear; it is I; don't be afraid."

Eugénie shrieked still louder, and Jeanneton ran in, carrying a saucepan, which was the first thing that came to hand, to defend her mistress.

"Wait, wait!" cried the grocer, who already saw his head threatened by the saucepan. "It is I, Jeanneton; take care what you are doing."

"Why, yes, it is monsieur," said the maid at last. "And pray, what business had you in my room," cried Eugénie, "in such a condition, and at this time of night? What does this mean?"

"Go and dress yourself," cried Jeanneton.

"Answer me, monsieur; what were you looking for in my room?"

"Why, really, madame, I came — I was looking — I —"

"Master! master!" cried the shop boys from below; "it's a serenade in your honor, to celebrate your marriage. They are knocking at the shop door; shall we open it?"

"What the devil do I care for the serenade and the musicians," said Dupont. "They came at a very awkward time. Don't open the door, Joseph; let them stay in the street."

"O monsieur!" said Jeanneton, "you cannot refuse to receive them. They are offering you a compliment, and the music is very fine. I recognize M. Gérard's voice."

"Yes," said Eugénie; "I recognize it also. They are friends, perhaps relations. They must be invited into the shop; it is customary."

"Well, dear wife, since it is the custom, I will go down and receive them. But I could very well have dispensed with their music."

Dupont put on his dressing-gown and went down to his shop in a very bad humor.

"O Jeanneton!" said Eugénie to her maid, "what should we have done without this serenade? M. Dupont dared —"

"That's how it seemed to me. We were fast asleep, and had the serenaders been a little later — mercy! It must be confessed that the concert was very timely, and that you are greatly indebted to M. Gérard."

It was indeed the perfumer who had conceived the idea of this pleasant surprise. M. Gérard would have given the serenade on the night of the marriage, had it been possible; but he could not get together his amateur musicians on that day. The violins had to attend a ball, the clarinet a reception, the hunting-horn a baptism, and the fife a funeral. They were obliged, therefore, to arrange their meeting for the eighth day. They met at M. Gérard's, and he borrowed a huge drum from a neighboring lottery office, where they always have music ready in honor of the big prizes, which do not fall to anybody.

It was, then, M. Gérard who had gathered the amateurs of his acquaintance and had led them to the Rue aux Ours, in order to give the newly married couple a sample of his politeness. We must not forget Gérard's conviction that Eugénie cherished a secret passion for him, which had once been revealed by certain little kicks that he had received under the table at the betrothal dinner; and, anticipating great pleasure in cultivating Madame Dupont's acquaintance, he bethought him of the serenade, and evinced the ardor of his friendship on that occasion by beating time on the huge drum, so that one had much trouble, in the midst of its uninterrupted booming, in recognizing the airs played by the amateur musicians. The shop boys hastened to open the door for the musicians.

Dupont appeared on the scene, wrapping his dressing-gown about him, and received the compliments and congratulations of the assembled gentlemen.

"Here he is! here he is! this happy mortal!" cried Gérard when he perceived the grocer; "this fortunate man, who has married one of the prettiest girls of the Rue Saint Martin. That was only a week ago, gentlemen, and he is still in his honeymoon. Quick, gentlemen; let us sing the air of 'Zemire et Azor,'—'Let us Watch, my Sisters'; it is the song of the newly married."

The musicians hastened to execute the piece which was asked for, and, in order to be more comfortable, the violin mounted the counter, the hunting-horn seated himself upon the loaves of sugar, the clarinet upon a keg of glue, and the fife upon a barrel of molasses. Gérard only, intrepid and indefatigable, promenaded about the shop with the big drum before him; and, as the sticks did not make enough noise, he seized a great roll of black licorice and a little penny broom, and with these he made a pretence of drumming out the air of "Let us Watch, my Sisters."

Dupont did not dare to stop his ears, though the noise was something awful. As if to increase it, the two shop boys, discovering that "Let us Watch, my Sisters," made a very pretty waltz, began to dance with very high jumps in the back of the shop.

"Ah, that's what you may call execution," said Gérard when the selection was finished. "We played that with a great deal of spirit. I am sure you did not expect this little surprise — did you, friend Dupont?"

"No, gentlemen, no; I confess that I did not expect it."

"It was my idea. We intended to come a week ago, and when I found this was impossible I said, 'The fifteenth shall not pass without a little serenade.'"

"You are very kind."

"The establishment of such a delightful household must necessarily be celebrated with the music of a great orchestra."

"Gentlemen, I assure you, I am very grateful."

"I am afraid we have disturbed you. I am sure you were with your wife. Are we to see madame?"

"No, I am afraid not; she has retired; but she sent her compliments; she appreciates your kindness, and she recognized your voice, Monsieur Gérard."

"Ah, she recognized my voice," said Gérard, smiling mischievously. "Gentlemen, I will sing for you 'The Boy the Ladies Love.' It is very pretty, and I shall do my best."

The perfumer sang, endeavoring to give his voice as much volume as possible, in the belief that the young wife would listen to him with in-

terest. The musicians accompanied him, but they played "Let us Watch, my Sisters," because they did not know "The Boy the Ladies Love."

Dupont had decided to be pleased, so he found the effect of this very charming, and the two boys danced the german while it was going on.

"Gentlemen," said the grocer at the conclusion of the air, feeling complimented in this song, and believing himself designated as "the boy the ladies love," "will you accept a glass of brandy?"

"Why, yes, very willingly; two would be preferable."

Dupont supplied the glasses of brandy, which the musicians considered excellent. It put the grocer on his mettle, and he decided to do things in style. He invited them to have something sweet, and poured out some ratafia.

"Thanks for the ratafia," said the clarinet.

"Gentlemen," said the perfumer, "we pass 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe.' It is Voltaire's 'utile dolce.'"

"No, gentlemen," said Dupont, "it is not Voltaire's 'utile dolce'; it is Louvres ratafia, the best quality."

"The bridegroom is not quite familiar with the fine arts," said the perfumer aside to the clarinet, "but the ratafia is delicious."

Dupont was charmed with the praise bestowed upon his liqueurs. He passed from ratafia to parfait amour, and from parfait amour to rum. After

each libation the musicians executed another composition, and the more glasses they drank, the more they entered into the spirit of the occasion, and each played his loudest in trying to excel his neighbors.

Gérard ended by taking a pestle to strike his big drum. Songs were mingled with sounds of instruments. Dupont, rendered lively by the brandy, joined the chorus with the musicians; everybody sang or played; one could distinguish only noise; but the gayety was wild, and appeared likely to continue until morning, when suddenly the fifer disappeared in a cask of molasses, and the clarinet sank down in a keg of glue.

These gentlemen, in the ardor of their performance, forgot the foundations on which they rested. Inspired by the brandy, they beat time to the music with hand and foot,—with the whole body, in fact,—and the consequence was that the tops of the barrels fell in. The songs were followed by shrieks; everyone ran toward the fifer, who was most in need of help; he had been standing upon a hogshead, and had almost entirely disappeared, for the molasses was up to his neck. They drew him out with considerable difficulty; the poor musician could scarcely move; he had many quarts of liquid sugar upon his body, and he could not take a step without sticking fast to his neighbors.

The clarinet player escaped more easily. He

had been sitting upon his keg, so he only went half in; his head and his legs escaped; but he carried away several pounds of glue on his breeches. This accident put an end to the concert, and the amateurs, saying good-by to M. Dupont, each one took his way to his own dwelling. M. Gérard, delighted to have given such a proof of his gallantry, hoped its reward would not be lacking; the fifer walked with difficulty, because his shoes were full of molasses and stuck fast to the pavement at each step; the clarinet player, on the contrary, jumped all along the road, in order to free his breeches from the drops of glue which clung to them.

It was past two o'clock in the morning, and Dupont, wearied with the night's experiences, decided to go to bed.

"I will visit my wife another time," he said, as he returned to his room. "I have found the way now, and there will not be a serenade every night."

CHAPTER VI

A Husband's Enterprises

Although three days had passed since the friendly serenade, Dupont had not yet resumed his nocturnal promenades. However, since the night that Eugénie had perceived her husband beside her bed in his towering nightcap, she was in constant expectation of a visit from him and scarcely dared to sleep. She went to bed trembling; her ear was always listening, and she rose at the slightest sound.

Jeanneton promised her mistress to watch beside her, and besought her to take some rest, for such constant watches could not fail to affect her health; but Eugénie did not dare to trust to her maid. Jeanneton then thought of another means of restoring her mistress' tranquillity. Taking her cot each night, she placed it in the corridor which led to Eugénie's room; with Jeanneton sleeping there, no one could reach her mistress without her knowledge, as access to Eugénie's room could only be gained by climbing over the bed, it was therefore impossible to reach the mistress without waking the maid. The event which Jeanneton had foreseen came to pass. Dupont came by the

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same way as on the first occasion to reach his wife's room. He crossed the domestic's room, supposing her asleep, but was arrested in amazement when he saw her bed in the corridor, and found that his passage was barred. Jeanneton heard M. Dupont's footsteps, and pretended to be asleep, in order to discover what he would do. The grocer paused, swore between his teeth, looked to see if he could crawl under the bed, and, deciding that this was impossible, deliberated as to whether he could cross over it. He decided that it would not be safe to attempt the barrier, because he felt sure he could not get over Jeanneton's bed without awakening her; so he returned, grumbling, to his own apartment.

"He's gone," said Jeanneton, half under her breath, to her mistress, who had also heard M. Dupont's footsteps. The servant could not restrain a chuckle when she recalled the face of the bridegroom.

"O Jeanneton!" said Eugénie; "he keeps trying something new all the time. How unhappy I am! How can I ever endure this life!"

"We certainly have a queer household."

But Dupont had not returned to his own room without the hope of being more fortunate another time. The next morning he called Jeanneton, who suspected what was about to occur.

"How does it happen that you no longer sleep in your room?" demanded the grocer.

"Monsieur, it is because madame is so timid at night; that is why. I put my bed in the corridor so I can be near her."

"If my wife is timid, I am the one to reassure her. I forbid you, Mademoiselle Jeanneton, to put your bed in the corridor again. I have a perfect right to go into my wife's room any way I please."

"But, monsieur, madame—"

"But,—but,—but! Once more I forbid you to place your bed there; if you do, I shall discharge you. What the devil! It's funny if I can't take care of my wife when she is timid."

"I will not put it there any more, monsieur."

"Very good; then I can go to my wife's room without any difficulty."

Jeanneton reported the orders her master had given her to Eugénie, who wept and groaned, imploring Heaven's kindness; and the servant said to herself, "This is getting very embarrassing."

The next night Dupont put on his nightcap with the sky-blue ribbon, wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, took his candlestick and started for his wife's room. The bed was no longer in the corridor. Jeanneton was in her own room, where she pretended to be asleep; but, like her mistress, she was all ears.

Dupont had scarcely put his foot in his wife's room when a loud noise, like the falling of a pile

of plates, was heard in the kitchen. Dupont started with astonishment, Eugénie sat up very straight in bed, and Jeanneton screamed.

"What is that?" asked the grocer, trembling.

"I am dying of fright," said Eugénie.

"O good God, it is the devil!" cried Jeanneton.

"The devil?" repeated Dupont, a little undecided as to whether he ought to venture into the kitchen. At last he determined to show a bold front, and he returned to Jeanneton's chamber, who pretended to be getting out of bed.

"Did you hear it, monsieur?"

"Yes, certainly I heard it. What was it?"

"What was it! Oh, monsieur, it's a terrible thing!"

"Why? How is that? Why is it terrible? Do you know what it is?"

"No, monsieur, I don't know. Ask madame."

"Does she know?"

"No, monsieur; but she will tell you as I do, that it was something frightful, and it is not at all strange that she is timid at night. This is not the first time we have heard a sound like that. Sometimes it is different; it is like groans, and sighs, and complaints."

"What! There must be thieves in the house."

"Oh, monsieur, I don't think they are thieves. I have often looked carefully, and I have seen nothing. How very fortunate that you heard it

tonight, monsieur! If you could only find out what it is."

"Yes, it is very fortunate, as you say —"

"Wait now, monsieur; you are brave, and you are very likely to think I am foolish; all the same, I believe that this noise is made by a ghost."

"A ghost! Come, don't be foolish, Jeanneton."

But the grocer no longer dared to look in the direction of the kitchen. "Come, let us reassure my wife," he said to Jeanneton. They both entered Eugénie's chamber, who had risen, dressed herself, and was seated by the fire.

"What! are you up, madame?"

"Yes, monsieur; it is impossible for me to sleep again after the fright I've had."

"Jeanneton says that you often hear strange sounds."

"Yes, monsieur; I am constantly disturbed here."

"I will complain to the proprietor, madame."

"Oh, monsieur," said Jeanneton, "if it is the devil who is in the house, what can the proprietor do about it?"

"I don't believe in ghosts, Jeanneton. I think it is more likely to be thieves. Come with me; we will search the kitchen."

"Do you really want to, monsieur?"

"Wait; I will go and call my two assistants. Halloo, Joseph! François!"

Wakened by their master's cry, the two shop

boys came upstairs. Jeanneton and Dupont accompanied them into the kitchen, where they found half a dozen plates broken on the floor.

"Well, monsieur," said Jeanneton, "what is that?"

"Those are broken plates."

"Yes, but who broke them?"

"I should like to ask you that, Jeanneton."

"It is the ghost, monsieur."

"Bah! bah! Jeanneton, you don't know what you are talking about," replied the grocer; but he placed himself behind his two boys, nevertheless.

"These plates didn't break themselves. Now, if we had a cat you could say it was the cat; but we haven't an animal of any kind. Look, François, Joseph, — look and see if you can find one anywhere."

The grocer's assistants were not at all cowardly, and they thoroughly searched the apartment and assured their master there was nobody there. They then returned to their beds, and Dupont proposed to his wife that he should pass the night with her; but she thanked him and said that she preferred to sit by the fire. Jeanneton screamed and started at the slightest noise which she heard. She declared that she had closed the door of the kitchen, and that she would not go there alone at night for all the riches in the world.

Dupont did not insist upon remaining near his

wife; the story of the ghost, the broken plates, and the contortions of Jeanneton had banished his amorous desires. He returned to his chamber quite sorrowfully, taking great care not to look around him; and, once there, he slipped quickly into bed and pulled the cover over his head.

Several days passed, and the grocer did not resume his nocturnal visits to his wife. Jeanneton congratulated herself upon the success of her ghost story, and even Eugénie felt a little reassured.

But Dupont was still thinking of his enterprises. In the morning he determined regularly to seek his wife's chamber at night; but when night came and silence succeeded the sound of passing footsteps, when the shopkeepers had closed their places of business, and everybody sought repose, Dupont experienced a certain contraction of the heart. Jeanneton's tales returned to his memory, and though he repeated to himself that he did not believe in ghosts, he shrank from passing through the kitchen to reach his wife's room.

"Good Heavens!" he said to himself one evening, "I am very good-natured to be taking such a roundabout way to get into my wife's room. She double-locks the door that leads into the salon, because she is afraid, and I really can't blame her for being timid; but what is to prevent my having a double key made for the door? By that means I can go to her room without passing

through the kitchen, which would suit me much better, because it is shorter."

The next day Dupont managed to get possession of the key, and as it was an ordinary lock, by the following evening the locksmith had made him a key which would open the door of Madame Dupont's apartment. The grocer had replaced the other key, so that Eugénie did not suspect anything, and he waited the coming of night, believing that success would at last crown his efforts; and if obstacles increase love, it is not surprising that Dupont should feel some impatience. Night came at last; each one retired to his room. The mysterious hour of midnight sounded; and, while putting on his nightcap and dressing-gown, Dupont experienced a certain trembling. Was it love, or was it fear? Perhaps it was both.

However, the grocer, with an air of great determination, holding in one hand his ordinary candlestick, and in the other the key, made his way to his wife's apartment. He listened for a moment before putting the key in the lock. Profound silence reigned in the house.

"Apparently the ghost is not walking tonight," said Dupont. "I must hurry."

It is very easy to say hurry, but a new key does not always work so easily as one could wish. The poor husband turned and re-turned his in the lock; finally the door unclosed; he was in the apartment which he had so longed to penetrate.

But the noise he had made with the key had awakened Eugénie. She listened, looked, saw Dupont enter, and uttered a piercing cry the moment he approached the bed.

Jeanneton, roused immediately by her cry, ran to her mistress, and of course saw what had alarmed her.

"O my poor dear!" she exclaimed, seizing Eugénie's hand.

"Well, what is the matter now?" asked the grocer, who was startled himself at his wife's cry. "Why does she scream so? What is the matter?"

"O monsieur, she has another attack! Wait! wait! Hold her before she stiffens!"

"What! it is another attack? This is very distressing, Jeanneton."

"Goodness! It's your fault, monsieur; you came in like a ghost, and you frightened her."

"Well, how do you wish me to come in? It seems to me I come in every way. — Quick! get me the orange-flower water, the Hoffmann's drops, and the ether. It's lucky I have everything ready."

Jeanneton ran to get several small phials, and came to assist her mistress, who repulsed the maid, because it annoyed her to use a stratagem; but the servant whispered to her, "It is the only way, madame," and Eugénie submitted to being rubbed on the nose and temples with ether.

"Shall I go and bring help?" asked Dupont.

"Oh, no, monsieur; twenty people could not do more than I am doing."

"I don't understand it; she was well enough this morning, and this evening she has a nervous attack."

"Oh, monsieur, a little thing only is necessary to upset a young woman; you frightened her—that's sure. You should have knocked; one doesn't go like a sneak into anybody's room."

"Like a sneak! What are you talking about? Can't I come into my wife's room as I please?"

"But I have already told you, monsieur, we are afraid of ghosts at night."

"Do I look like a ghost, Jeanneton?"

"No, you certainly don't, especially with that nightcap on."

"She does not open her eyes, Jeanneton."

"She will not so long as you are here, monsieur. Go to bed, and do not be anxious. I will take the best care of her. She will be ill now for another week at least."

"Well, I have certainly had enough of nervous women, Jeanneton."

"Yes; the only thing for a sensible person is to make the best of the matter."

"Well, watch her carefully, Jeanneton; I see I may as well go to bed again."

"All right, monsieur; don't be anxious; I don't think she'll be ill longer than usual."

Dupont returned to his own room, swearing at

his mother-in-law because she had concealed her daughter's real condition. He got into bed, but he was so annoyed at this new event that he could not close an eye. After an hour passed in vainly trying to sleep, he said to himself, "Since I can't sleep, I'll go and see how my wife is getting along."

When Dupont retired, Eugénie had risen and slipped into Jeanneton's room to chat about this new visit, having no idea that he would return the same night; but he did, nevertheless. He softly approached his wife's bed, but she was not there.

"Good God!" he exclaimed; "what has become of my wife? What has happened to her, Jeanneton?"

Dupont's voice made Eugénie and the maid tremble, but Jeanneton did not lose her head. She ran with a distressed look toward Dupont, "Here I am, monsieur; here I am."

"And my wife,—where is my wife?"

"She is in my room, monsieur."

"And why has she left her bed?"

"She walked into my room, I tell you."

"Then she is no longer ill?"

"Oh, something else is the matter at present; her other infirmity has seized her."

"What other infirmity?"

"You know very well, monsieur; the one she has been afflicted with since her infancy."

"From infancy? But what is it, Jeanneton?"

"Mercy, monsieur! from infancy she has been a somnambulist; it's a very bad case, too."

"My wife a somnambulist! My God! is there anything else?"

"But didn't you know it, monsieur?"

"How should I know it, when I have never slept with her?"

"That's so, monsieur. Stop; won't you come and see her? Come with me."

Jeanneton guided her master to her room, where Eugénie was seated motionless before a table.

"Look, monsieur; her eyes are open."

"That is true enough."

"Well, she is asleep."

"Are you sure she is asleep?"

"Call her; you will see if she answers you."

Dupont called his wife twice, but obtained no response.

"What did I tell you, monsieur?"

"I see she is asleep."

"She may be two hours like that."

"In that case I will go back to bed, Jeanneton; for I don't like to look at somnambulists."

"Go, monsieur; I am used to it."

The grocer returned to his apartment, and Eugénie took Jeanneton roundly to task for her new falsehood, imploring her to use no further artifices.

"Then do you want really to be his wife?"

"No, Jeanneton; but I wish to deal frankly

with him; I will not employ means which oblige me to deride my husband."

"Well, I am at the end of my resources, and the best way,— the only way,—if you don't want him to come and find you, is to put bolts on your doors."

"You are right, Jeanneton; I shall inform M. Dupont of my unalterable resolution, and I shall have bolts put on all my doors."

"It won't put him in a very good humor, but at least we shall sleep in peace."

The next day Dupont consulted a physician, who told him that it was impossible for one to be afflicted at the same time with nervous attacks and somnambulism. In order to be fully satisfied, he went up to see the young woman, and Dupont waited impatiently to learn the result of the visit. The physician smiled as he came from the invalid's apartment.

"How is my wife?" demanded the grocer.

"She is very well, I assure you," replied the doctor; "you have no cause for anxiety."

"Very well," said Dupont to himself; "and Jeanneton just told me she was very ill."

The husband considered the events which had for some time taken place, and which had invariably prevented the consummation of his desires, and began to suspect the truth of the stories related to him by Jeanneton, and to believe that she was in league with Eugénie.

"She told me she did not love me, and even told me that she didn't wish to — But all their subterfuges will be of no avail, and my wife shall learn that I am her husband. I shall go to her room tonight, and, in order that she may not pretend to be frightened or surprised, I will apprise her of my intentions."

The grocer immediately called his servant.

"Jeanneton, go at once to my wife, and, that she may not be unprepared, tell her that tonight I intend to visit her."

"Why, monsieur!"

"Yes, go; you understand — tonight I shall go to find her, and I do not expect she will have a nervous attack in consequence. Tell her that."

"But, monsieur, one cannot be certain about that."

"Go at once, Jeanneton, and do not argue about it."

"I have shown some decision," said Dupont to himself, when the servant had left him; "it is necessary to be determined with young women, and I feel sure she will now prove submissive."

The night arrived which should witness this miracle, and Dupont turned his steps toward his wife's apartment at the usual hour; but when he endeavored to open the door it would not yield. He knocked, he called, he pushed, but his efforts were useless. He ran to the other entrance, through the kitchen, but he met the same resist-

ance there. Everywhere strong bolts impeded his progress.

"Oh, this is too much!" cried Dupont. "She has put on bolts! Does she think I will stand that? Does she suppose I will accommodate myself to this kind of life? No! no! I will never consent to it! Early tomorrow, since I am compelled, I will take strong measures; I will go to the justice."

CHAPTER VII

The Husband and the Justice

The new expedient which Eugénie had used to prevent her husband from entering her room had enraged Dupont, and stirred him out of his ordinary placidity. He decided to employ direct means to exact from his wife the performance of the duties which she had undertaken in accepting him for her husband. The grocer had become exasperated, and was determined to show a firmness that could not be withstood. Evidently his mother-in-law did not intend to help him; therefore he would not go to complain to her again, but would endeavor to obtain redress from the justice of his district. Accordingly, on the following morning, he turned his steps toward the office of this functionary.

The antechamber of the magistrate was filled with a crowd of people who had come to him with their complaints. We miserable human beings have a habit of complaining. Men are rarely contented with their fate. Even those whose wants are satisfied complain just the same, and those who are constantly disappointed in their desires of course must grumble. Complaint is the con-

tinual refrain of the merchants, the brokers, and especially of the publishers. One-half of the world laughs at the other, they say, but three-quarters of the human race complain of circumstances. With some people it is a habit, and, not content with complaints, they try to vent their humor on others, from which arise disputes, quarrels, and visits to the justice. If the individual established there were commissioned only to receive the statements of people who were contented, satisfied, and spoke well of their neighbors, the officer could be very tranquil, and could do without a deputy.

Dupont, in spite of his impatience, was forced to sit down in a corner of the hall and hear the complaints of those who had entered before himself. It is no small affair to listen to people who demand their rights.

An old woman was annoyed with her neighbor's dog, and was advised to keep her door shut. She went out swearing that she would get her neighbor warned out.

"Monsieur," said a tall fellow, holding a whip in his hand, "I come to complain of that gentleman there, who wished to give me twenty-one sous for his fare in a cabriolet."

The gentleman complained of was a man of about fifty years, well curled and cravated, but whose coat and trousers were a little shabby, and who smiled all the time he was speaking, to show his teeth.

"Monsieur," he said to the justice, "this rogue —"

"No insults, monsieur."

"I wish to say that this rogue of a coachman will not explain the affair properly. I took him at the Barrière du Trône to go to the Carré Saint Martin."

"Yes, and I say that the trip was a long one, and you had with you a little mother who weighed two hundred pounds at least, and my horse could not draw any more."

"If your horse is a poor jade, I am not to blame for it."

"A jade! Cocotte a jade! Ah, he will go farther than you!"

"Come, monsieur, to the point."

"The point is, Monsieur Justice, that I supposed the fare of the cabriolet to be twenty sous, and in giving him twenty-one, I gave him one for drink money, which was very fair."

"Yes, that is genteel. Drag you from the Barrière du Trône for that! — a generous pauper!"

"In short, justice, I wished to pay him, and he threw the money in my face."

"That is to say, I wanted my fare, which is twenty-five sous, according to the schedule; and generous people pay thirty."

"Oh, this rascal! this wretch!"

"Wretch yourself!"

"There! there! No personalities."

"Instead of telling me that his fare was twenty-five sous, he insulted me; he cursed the lady who was with me; then, monsieur, I decided not to pay him at all, which I would have done immediately had he been fair."

"All that is not true, justice; he was never willing to give me more than twenty-one sous,—though in order to do it he borrowed ten sous from the person who was with him. He could not pay me my fare, and thought it easier to give me nothing. But one should not take a carriage when one has only eleven sous in his pocket."

"Be quiet, rascal; you are impertinent."

The justice put an end to the dispute by compelling the gentleman to pay the coachman twenty-five sous, and ordering the latter to be more courteous in future. The gentleman, after searching in vain in all his pockets, ended by borrowing four sous of the justice, and retired amid the derisive laughter of the assembly.

"Monsieur," said a young girl, "they don't want me to put my flowerpot in my window. It is only a little myrtle, so pretty, that my little cousin gave me,—a myrtle, that would not kill anyone, monsieur."

"Monsieur, my neighbors are always dancing," exclaimed a tall, yellow, thin woman; "they make an infernal noise, and do not go to bed until half past eleven. It is a constant racket and noise, and their children are disorderly, and play or sing con-

tinually on the staircase, or amuse themselves by treading on my dog's paws."

"Complain to the proprietor, madame."

"But, monsieur, my landlord is such a ridiculous man! He loves children."

"Monsieur, my husband has beaten me," cried a young woman in her apron, with a handkerchief tied round her head.

"Had he any reason for his anger?"

"Bah! reasons! He said it was because his supper was not ready; because I did not know what time it was, and I went into our neighbor, the gilder's, and he showed me his sundial; that is all, monsieur."

"Had your husband forbidden you to go and see your neighbor's sundial?"

"I believe he had; but I had to go, monsieur, to regulate the clock; my husband's had stopped; it had not run for two weeks. And he broke my legs with a broomhandle, and said he would do other things! Oh, oh, oh! And I want you to have him arrested."

"Monsieur," said the plaintive voice of a ragged man, leaning on a crutch, and having a plaster over his eye, "they have nearly crushed me to death; if it had not been for the help of the passers-by, I could not have left the place."

"It seems to me that this is the third time in a month."

"It is true, monsieur; I have been very un-

fortunate for some time; all of the carriages pass over my body."

"Monsieur," complained a young man, "something was thrown at me as I was passing along this street here yesterday evening. I had a lady on my arm; my coat and her hat were very wet. It came from the third floor of this woman's house."

"Monsieur," replied the accused woman, "you are making a great fuss about a very little thing. It was only water."

"Water, madame! and my coat is all spotted!"

"If your coat is badly dyed, I'm not to blame."

"Monsieur," cried a little woman of sixty years in a sharp voice, "I come to demand justice and vengeance."

"Mon Dieu, madame! what is it?"

"I am outraged. I am injured. I am attacked in what I hold most dear. Yesterday evening, monsieur, a stout fellow, a ruffian, a beast, as I passed along the Rue Saint Martin,— and I was going very quickly, I assure you, for I know women are not safe in the streets of Paris,— well, monsieur, an audacious fellow who walked behind me stepped forward and pinched me! Do you realize that, monsieur? Good Heavens! I almost fainted. I approached a lighted shop, when the wretch stepped forward, looked at me again, and fled. But I should recognize him among a thousand. I have come to give you his description,

monsieur, and I beg you will have him identified and arrested."

"Monsieur Justice, they have broken my merchandise," cried one; "They have stolen a handkerchief," said another; "They have broken my lantern, my glasses;" "This man called me a thief;" "This beggar called me a rascal;" "They sold me a powder for the teeth which made them fall out;" "They stole my dog;" "They want me to pay for something I didn't get;" "My porter let me sleep in the street;" "My husband gets drunk;" "My wife sleeps in the city."

The complaints came from all sides. They screamed, they shouted; each wanted to be heard. It was not without difficulty that the justice endeavored to quiet some and console others.

At last Dupont's turn came. He approached the justice with a mysterious air, and asked to speak to him in private. The grocer's face, his strange solemnity and melancholy voice, led the magistrate to suppose he had come to see him on some very important affair. He hastened to pass into an adjoining room with him, where he gave orders that they should not be disturbed.

"I have come to see you, monsieur, on a very serious matter, one in which the peace of all husbands is involved."

"I see, monsieur; you wish to lay a question of grave importance before me."

"I am married, monsieur."

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"To the facts, monsieur, if you please!"

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY WILLIAM GLACKENS.

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"To the facts, monsieur, if you please!"

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY WILLIAM GLACKENS.

"I congratulate you, monsieur."

"You are very kind. It was six weeks ago, monsieur; you imagine that I am living with my wife, as a husband should."

"Cum ardore et impetu. I understand, monsieur."

"Impetu; yes, monsieur. In fact, I did not take a wife because I wanted to remain a bachelor."

"To the facts, monsieur, if you please."

"The case is, monsieur, that since I am married it is just the same as it was before; it is absolutely the same. There is no more difference than between barley-sugar and sugar-candy."

"I don't understand you, monsieur."

"Monsieur, my wife does not wish —"

"Does not wish what, monsieur? To the point, if you please!"

"But, monsieur, I have been married for six weeks and —"

"Monsieur, you are mocking at me."

"No, monsieur; but my wife is mocking me."

"Will you finish, monsieur? Speak more clearly or leave me."

"It seems to me it is clear enough. I have been married six weeks, and I have not yet spent the night with my wife."

"And is this the grave affair on which you have come to consult me? Good Heavens! sleep with your wife as much as you please, but don't disturb me about it."

"As much as I please, monsieur! That's very easy for you to say; but when she won't allow it what am I to do?"

"My faith, monsieur, it is the first time I have been consulted about such a thing as that, and I don't see how I can help you."

"But, monsieur, isn't there any law? Isn't a wife obliged to—"

"Let us see; we have in title V of the Civil Code, which treats of marriage, article 212, wherein it is said, 'Husband and wife owe each other fidelity, succor and aid;' and article 213, which says, 'The husband owes to his wife, protection; the wife, obedience to her husband.'"

"Obedience! Ah, monsieur, my wife has forgotten that article, surely."

"In article 214 it says formally, 'The wife is obliged to live with her husband, and must follow him wherever he thinks best to reside.'"

"To live; well, we live under the same roof, monsieur; but as to following me, she certainly doesn't do that, for I go out often, and she never goes outside of her room."

"'The husband is obliged to furnish all the necessaries of life, according to his means and estate.'"

"Well, and all that means that she is obliged to live with me and to perform all the duties of a wife?"

"Why, surely, monsieur; do you not under-

stand it so? The wife is obliged to live with her husband."

"Good! good! I understand. Now, monsieur, what do you advise me to do?"

"I should say if you read article 214 of the Civil Code to your wife, it will be sufficient."

"That is all right, monsieur; I will read it to-day. But supposing it should have no effect upon her?"

"Then, monsieur, I don't know what to do. It must be a mere caprice of your wife. Could she have any special reason? It is very singular. Was your wife a widow, monsieur?"

"No, monsieur; she is a young girl."

"She has no deformity?"

"Nothing of the kind, monsieur; she is as perfect as you or I."

"It is not always safe to trust to appearances, monsieur. Sometimes the most seductive beauties conceal a frightful deformity."

"O good Heavens, monsieur! Can my wife have some deformity?"

"I do not say so, monsieur; but you know the serpent hides in the grass (latet anguis in herba)."

"I don't know if she has la tête anguis, monsieur, but I know she is furiously entêtée — stubborn. Anyway, I'll read the Civil Code to her, and if she hasn't some hidden defect, if she is not concealing anything, I flatter myself — well —

besides, you — you could send her a summons — could you not, monsieur?"

"Yes, monsieur; but let us hope it will not come to that. Sooner or later your wife will yield to kindness and patience and considerate treatment."

"Yes, and to articles 213 and 214; I am going to learn them by heart. I have the honor to wish you good-morning, monsieur."

Dupont left the man of law, and, before returning home, hastened to buy a copy of the Civil Code.

CHAPTER VIII

Adolphe's Return. A Happy Home

We left Adolphe weeping for his father, whose death had deprived him of the only friend he had in the world, the only being who could sympathize with him, with whom he could find consolation, wise counsel, and the sweet confidence of friendship, that beautiful sentiment which one meets so seldom among men. How many people live and die without having had a friend! Friendship is as rare as love is common.

But a good father is the first friend whom nature gives us. What regret should one not feel in losing him, especially when a rare intimacy has made him the confidant of our joys and our sorrows!

> One replaces a wife, and a lover and friend,
> But a virtuous father's more precious than all,
> And to each can but one from the kind gods fall.

Adolphe's sorrow, though deep and genuine, was alleviated by the memory of the last days that they had spent together.

Fortunate in that he had been able to soften the pain of the last moments of the author of his

days, proud to have been his guardian, his support, and to have fulfilled the duties of a good son to the last sad moments, Adolphe soon felt a sweet melancholy replace the bitter sorrow which had overcome him. Not that he forgot his father; he thought of him constantly; and the memory was full of charm to him, for he could say to himself, "My father never had cause to complain of his son." He spent several days in arranging the modest belongings of M. Dalmont, and, after turning his little inheritance into cash, he visited his father's grave, and then started for Paris.

He had been away a little more than two months, and he was far from suspecting all that had transpired during his absence. Jeanneton's silence surprised him, but he supposed that affairs had remained as he had left them, and the maid had not considered it worth while to write.

As he approached Paris he became less tranquil; fresh anxieties rose in his heart. Could he see his Eugénie again? Was she still guarded with the same severity, and could he find means to communicate with her? These questions returned again and again to his mind, and as his inward disturbance increased, he quickened his steps. At last he reached the capital, and at once directed himself towards Eugénie's house. He might not be able to meet her that evening; but he could see the walls enclosing her, and to a lover even that was precious.

Adolphe entered the Rue Saint Martin; how his heart beat as he approached the lace dealer's shop! Surely she will be there. He would perhaps see her. Two months would surely have restored her to liberty. He looked through the windows, he saw no one, he passed again; he loitered a little; he saw only Bidois and Madame Moutonnet.

"Is it possible you are still imprisoned? Poor Eugénie! and I am the cause of it," exclaimed Adolphe. "If I could meet Jeanneton! But I must wait till night,—always wait! And shall I be happy tonight? It seems as if it were a century since I have seen her, and I have no doubt the time has seemed just as long to her. I will go and question my portress, and see if she gave my letter to Jeanneton. I must look for a room too, but I will not go back to that—no, no; I will not again live in the vicinity of Mademoiselle Zélie."

Before leaving the Rue Saint Martin, Adolphe passed the shop once more. Bidois, who had recognized the young man through the window, left his desk, and with a bantering air placed himself upon the doorsill. He did not dare to look at Adolphe, but compressed his lips, and took a pinch of snuff with a scornful and mocking expression.

Bidois' grimaces attracted Adolphe's attention. He wished to question him, but dared not, and,

having vainly tried to read in the old clerk's eyes that which he wanted to know, he hurried on; while Bidois returned to his calculations, delighted because he thought he had been victorious in this encounter.

Adolphe hastened to the portress, who had been commissioned with his letter to Jeanneton. She uttered an exclamation when she saw this young man.

"What! is it you, monsieur? Ah, you have been away a long time."

"I could not leave my father, Madame Remy; he died in my arms."

"Poor, dear man! And what did he die of?"

"Ah, I will tell you later, Madame Remy; but please tell me if you gave Jeanneton my letter?"

"Your letter? Yes, monsieur; I gave it to her myself, the evening of your departure."

"Oh, thank you; then I feel more easy. And what is the news in this neighborhood, Madame Remy, at M. Moutonnet's?"

"What news? Oh, there is nothing new in the last six weeks."

"In six weeks? Did something unusual happen at that time?"

"Why, the marrriage of Mademoiselle Eugénie; that is all."

"The marriage of Eugénie?"

"Yes, the marriage. But what is the matter, monsieur? You are pale."

"No, no; it is nothing. But you are mistaken, no doubt, Madame Remy; it cannot be Eugénie, M. Moutonnet's daughter, of whom you are speaking."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, — Mademoiselle Eugénie Moutonnet. I know her well; the marriage was in Saint Nicholas' church. Sit down, monsieur; how you do tremble! You are going to be ill — that is sure. Drink a little wine."

"No, no, madame; it is nothing; I feel better; it will pass."

"Poor young man! It frightens me to see him like that. It is a shock — fatigue, perhaps. These young men go so fast, get heated, and then — "

"Yes, madame, it is a shock; but that will disappear. And who is the gentleman that married Mademoiselle Eugénie?"

"M. Dupont, the grocer, of the Rue aux Ours. He is a stout man with a stupid look; you must have seen him."

"Yes, yes; I know him. They were married six weeks ago, you say?"

"Yes, monsieur. Oh, it was a wedding that caused enough sensation. There were bouquets at the heads and tails of the horses. You can imagine that everybody wanted to see that. And then the husband, M. Dupont, had such a droll face."

"Thank you, Madame Remy; I don't wish to know any more."

"You are going, monsieur; and your bundle?"

"Keep it for a while longer, if it will not trouble you."

"Oh, not at all, monsieur. And you have no word for Mamzelle Jeanneton? She is now in the service of Madame Dupont; she did not leave her young mistress."

"With Madame Dupont?"

"Yes, with the grocer's wife."

"With — Adieu, Madame Remy."

"You do not wish to leave any word? I see her rarely; but, to oblige you —"

"No, no; I have nothing more to say to her, I thank you."

Adolphe left the portress, and walked away from the Rue Saint Martin, without caring to pass Madame Moutonnet's shop. He walked swiftly, and as if he had no aim. He wished only to get as far from Eugénie's house as possible. He fled from it with as much eagerness as he had sought it a few hours before.

The night had fallen. Adolphe walked from street to street, conscious of but one thought, — she was married. Each moment he repeated to himself these words, and yet he tried to persuade himself that they were not true, that his ears had not heard aright. However, the portress had given so many details, he knew there could be no mistake. Besides, it had all been planned — had been projected before his departure. How could

he have hoped to prevent it? But Eugénie had promised to be faithful to him alone. Eugénie, so tender, so loving, so sincere, had been able to forget Adolphe and marry Dupont! He did not say, "They must have compelled her; she was obliged to obey her parents; she had no power to resist them."

He said nothing of all that, for jealousy made him unjust, and, far from seeking excuses for Eugénie, he overwhelmed her with reproaches; he saw only her wrong conduct, but none of the wrongs that had been heaped upon her. He did not think of the tears she had shed, or of the torments she had endured. But love is egotistic, and, demanding that all be sacrificed to it, takes no account of the tears of which it is the cause.

"How false women are!" said Adolphe to himself. "How could she marry that Dupont, whom she said she detested? I was scarcely gone before she yielded. And she is married; she has forgotten our last interview; yet how she seemed to love me!"

He had walked on indifferently; and he found himself, without knowing how, on the banks of the river, near Bercy. His limbs refused to carry him farther, and he sat down on the sloping bank. A young man and young woman sat a little farther along the bank, their arms tenderly interlaced.

The murmur of the water, the silence of the night, the sighing of the wind, the solitude of the

place, suggested to Adolphe the most melancholy thoughts, and added to his torments.

For the loving couple seated near by, the sound of the water was full of sweetness and peace, the silence of the night was charming, the wind was a zephyr which caressed them, and the solitude invited their tenderness and strengthened their love. Our surroundings take their color from the sensations which animate our souls, and that which is charming to a happy man often saddens an unfortunate one. One's eyes see the beauties of nature; but one's heart alone feels them, and it is difficult to charm a suffering heart. The lovers embraced. Adolphe heard a kiss. He rose, and moved several paces away; he could not endure the spectacle of this happy love.

His mind was filled with tragical and melancholy ideas. He conceived the project of seeking, beneath the dark water which flowed at his feet, an end to his suffering. He paused, disheartened and overcome with sorrow. He had nothing in the world to leave. It seemed as if his soul were already plunged into infinity. "Why should I linger upon the earth?" he exclaimed. "She does not love me; she belongs to another; she can never be mine. I have lost my father. I have no one who loves me."

Adolphe stepped forward to throw himself into the water; but he was surrounded suddenly by kindly arms, which held and saved him. He felt

himself drawn back from the water by the hands of two people, who did not loosen their grasp upon him. Warm tears fell upon his hand.

"O monsieur! what are you thinking of? What were you going to do?" said a voice which was sympathetic and trembling. "Why would you kill yourself? Why are you abandoned to despair? You do very wrong, monsieur. Don't you know that God watches over us, and that we must never doubt him? Charles, tell him that it is a sin to kill one's self."

"Take courage, monsieur," said the other person. "Recall your composure; banish such ideas; take courage. If you are in need, if you are poor, oh, we will do what we can for you gladly. Think, monsieur, of your parents, of your mother."

"I have no parents; I have no friends. A woman — But she does not love me any more."

"Well, monsieur, we will love you; we will be your friends — will we not, Charles? And you will see that you have not lost all."

Adolphe looked at the two persons who spoke to him. One was a young man of twenty years, in the garb of a workman; the other, a young woman who seemed scarcely sixteen, and who wore a modest working-gown. They were the two who had been seated not far from him on the bank. They had seen him rise precipitately, and had watched him closely. His excited manner, the disorder of his dress, and the inarticulate words which escaped

him made them fear his intention. They followed Adolphe, and arrived just in time to prevent the accomplishment of his fatal design. The young people surrounded Adolphe; they pressed his hands, and looked at him with real and sympathetic interest. He was much moved that they should care for him so unselfishly; his heart swelled; a torrent of tears escaped his eyes, and the young couple mingled their tears with his.

"Tell us, ah, tell us, monsieur, that you will not think of suicide again, and that you will give up this longing for death," said the young woman to Adolphe; "that you will give way no more to these horrible thoughts."

"No, no, my good friends; I promise you that I will banish such thoughts. You have made me realize that there is still sweet sympathy and faith in the world. I had lost my belief in it, but the tears you have made me shed have eased my suffering and despair."

"Come with us, monsieur; you can tell us your troubles. That will make them easier to bear."

"You are right, Charles; he must not leave us tonight. He shall stay with us."

"Besides, he has called us his friends, and we must be worthy of the title."

The young man and his companion each took one of Adolphe's arms and they walked away together. Adolphe allowed himself to accompany

them. His heart was full of gratitude for the interest these young people had shown in him, and he felt that he loved them already.

"We are not very rich," she said, as they walked along. "Charles, my husband, is an engraver, and I embroider; but we are very happy."

"Are you married?" said Adolphe, looking at them with surprise.

"Yes, monsieur," said the young woman; "we have been married almost five months. Perhaps you are astonished at finding us sitting alone on the river bank, but we love to be together in solitary places. We are never weary of each other, and we do not care much for other people. That is why you took us for lovers; and we are lovers, although we are married. Isn't that so, Charles?"

"Yes, dear Louise; could we ever weary of our happiness?"

Adolphe, delighted by the sight of these two young people's happiness, sighed as he thought of Eugénie again; he had hoped to live with her as these two lived.

They soon reached the home of the young people on Rue Saint Paul. They took Adolphe with them to the fourth story, and entered a very simple little apartment, arranged with much taste; everything showed order and cleanliness. They made him sit down; and, while the young man made a fire, the young woman set the table and

prepared a simple supper. Everything was soon ready, and Adolphe found himself seated at the table with his new friends.

"See, now," said Louise, taking his hand; "don't you think there are still some pleasant things in life?"

"Ah, dear friends," said Adolphe, as he looked at them tenderly, "you make me realize how guilty I was. One has no right to sacrifice life so long as honor is left. It is cowardly to try to escape suffering in that way. I blush for my sin; and when you know that it was for a woman—"

"Oh, monsieur, that is not reasonable," said Charles.

"Oh, if it was for a woman," said Louise, "that is different; I can easily pardon it. It may be foolish, but I like to think of such love. Ah, that's all very well; but to kill one's self,—that is too much, because then there is no longer any hope, and that is what a lover should always have. But tell us your sorrows; do not conceal anything from us."

Adolphe gave them an account of his love. He omitted nothing from the day of Saint Eustache until his return from Senlis. The young couple listened with attention.

"Oh, it was very wicked of her to break her promise to you," said Charles. "Forget her, Monsieur Adolphe; forget her, and follow her example."

"But perhaps they forced this young woman to take a husband," said Louise. "If her mother wished it, what could she do? A young girl cannot have her own will, and you were not there."

"But, my dear, they could have written to him, because Jeanneton knew that he was at Senlis."

"Yes; but still he could not leave when his father was dying. Is not that true, monsieur?"

"You are right, dear friends; I shall try to forget her."

"You will do well," said Charles. "A woman who would marry another is not worthy of your regrets. You will find a thousand to console you."

"Fie, Charles! It is too bad to talk like that. So, if they had forced me to marry someone else, you would have been very quickly consoled — would you?"

"Yes — no; why, of course not. But we don't want him to cherish his sorrow."

"Yes, I wish — Of course he must forget; but I want him to love her a little always."

"You have not found a room for the night," said Charles, "so you must stay with us. Louise, take one of the mattresses from our bed and put it in this room."

"Yes, immediately."

"But I am afraid that will inconvenience you, dear friends," said Adolphe.

"Not at all. It will be a pleasure to keep you longer with us."

"I will sleep upon a chair; you mustn't take your bed to pieces."

"Oh, our bed is much too soft," said Louise, smiling.

In a moment the couch was ready. The young people wished their new friend good-night, and urged him to sleep. They retired to their little bedroom, which for them was a temple of love; and Adolphe, sighing, said to himself, "What a charming home they make!"

The next morning Adolphe, fatigued by his long walk, and the shocks he had sustained in the evening, slept late, and when he awoke Louise was working by the side of her husband.

"I must leave you, dear friends," said Adolphe; "but I hope you will let me come and see you often. Your happiness and friendship will afford me much pleasure."

"Oh, we hope that you will come very often. It would be sad to forget friends after you had found them. What are you going to do now?" asked Charles. "Are you in need of money? I have very little, but I will share what I have with you."

"I do not need any, dear friends. My father left me a little fund, and, with my savings, I have nearly six hundred francs; with that I can wait until I find employment. I must first see about a room."

"Oh, try to get one near us."

"Bah!" said Louise, under her breath; "I wager he will get one near Eugénie."

Adolphe embraced his new friends, promised to see them soon and left them, more cheerful than he had been on the previous evening. "At least," he said, "I know there are still some hearts that love me."

CHAPTER IX

An Interview before Witnesses

It was some little time before Adolphe could decide as to where he should take a room. After looking at the lodgings in the Marais, which he found too quiet; in the Chaussée d'Antin, which he found too dear; and in the Faubourg Saint Germain, which he thought too far from his young friend; Adolphe returned to the neighborhood in which he had formerly lived. He passed and repassed between the Rue Saint Martin and the Rue aux Ours. Then he said to himself, —

"What does it matter to me that she lives in this neighborhood? why should I mind living near her? I hope I shall never see her; but it is unnecessary on that account to leave a convenient neighborhood, where I have my accustomed haunts, and where I hope through my acquaintances to get a situation? Why should I inconvenience myself? The little hotel where I had a room suited me well. Probably Mademoiselle Zélie is no longer there. I remember she said she intended to move. I will find out, and if she is not there I will rent that same little room."

Adolphe returned to his former lodging, and, learning that the young dancer had left the house some time before, fetched his effects from Madame Remy's, and reinstalled himself in his old apartment.

But this little chamber was haunted by the image of Eugénie. He recalled their last interview, and the wood at Romainville, where their first sweet promises were exchanged, and how he had looked into her eyes and first realized that she cared for him. He remained for some little time lost in his reveries and memories.

Then he rose quickly, pushed back the chair in which he had been seated, and took his hat.

"I will forget all that," he said. "I will think of it no more. I will go out and walk, and distract my thoughts, and dispel these useless regrets. I will triumph over my feebleness. I will show that I have some force, some character; I will forget her."

He went out as he said this, walking with long strides; but he turned about constantly in the same circle, and presently realized that he was on the Rue aux Ours.

"Before I forget her altogether," he said to himself, "I should like to see her just once, merely to humiliate and confound her. I should like her to read in my eyes all the scorn I feel for her, and show her my indifference. Yes, that's a very good idea. She will see then that her

treachery does not affect me, which will perhaps annoy her a little, and I shall be revenged."

Adolphe, delighted at having a pretext which would enable him to see Eugénie, turned toward Dupont's house, trying to persuade himself that he owed this little visit to his honor. He wanted to show his false sweetheart that he no longer loved her.

Dupont had just come in with a copy of the Civil Code, and was seated at his desk, where he was learning by heart articles 212, 213 and 214, so that he could cite them to his wife.

Adolphe entered the shop suddenly, and looked all about him, but he did not see Eugénie. He remained standing between the two shopmen, who asked him what he would have; but he made no reply.

"Serve the gentleman, Joseph," said the grocer, without lifting his eyes from his book.

"He doesn't tell us what he wants, monsieur."

Dupont's voice had roused Adolphe. He recovered himself and murmured something, scarcely knowing what he said. The grocer looked up at length, and, though he had not met Adolphe since the day of Saint Eustache, recognized him.

"Oh, I am glad to see you, monsieur. I remember you were at the picnic of M. Moutonnet in the wood at Romainville. Perhaps you recall me. I had on yellow breeches, and we had quite a row with the peasants."

"Yes, monsieur, I remember you perfectly," replied Adolphe, as he approached the counter. "I could not forget you; your face is always in my mind."

"Oh, monsieur, you are very kind."

"I heard of your marriage, and, as I was passing your shop, I thought I would offer you my congratulations."

"Oh, thank you, monsieur; won't you sit down?"

"Thank you; but I cannot; I must go on."

"But please stay a moment. You remember my wife; she was Mademoiselle Eugénie Moutonnet, the only daughter of the lace dealer. I remember at papa's picnic you danced several times with her; and perhaps you recall that in playing hide-and-seek you were lost with her."

"Yes, monsieur; indeed I do remember it."

"Oh, she's a very pretty woman, is my wife. Indeed, she's a very charming woman, provided there is no deformity, — la tête anguis, as the justice says. — But hush! silence! I will not speak of that."

"You have been married six weeks, monsieur?"

"Yes, almost; it is as if it were this morning. — Take care! Do not lean on that barrel. I have already had the heads knocked out of two by serenaders."

"Your wife, Mademoiselle Eugénie, is not in your shop?"

"No, no; she did not want to come down. Oh, young women are capricious, have strange ideas; and mine has some that are very singular. She has received such a very strict education. But I am studying now some little articles that I hope will arrange all that. My wife adores me, monsieur, and will you believe that she does not wish to confess it?"

"She adores you?"

"Yes, monsieur; I am convinced of it, though she says — Take care! You will overturn all my syrup."

"I congratulate you, monsieur, on your happiness."

"Ah, monsieur, as you know my wife, perhaps you would like to see her for a moment, and give her your compliments; for you were not at our wedding. I don't understand how Madame Moutonnet could have forgotten you. Oh, I assure you we had a great time. That was a wedding to be talked about. Do me the honor to come up with me, and I will present you to my wife."

"To your — Oh, no, monsieur; I — I cannot."

"But you only need stay a moment,—just long enough to say good-day. I am sure she would be glad to see you."

Adolphe did not know what to do. He was eager to see Eugénie, but dared not follow Dupont; while he was in this state of indecision, the grocer took him by the hand and conducted him

to his wife's apartment. Adolphe trembled; he scarcely breathed; he had not strength to resist. Eugénie was alone in her room, Jeanneton having gone out; the young woman was sewing, and as usual was lost in thought. She had dropped her needle; her eyes were fixed upon her work, and Eugénie believed herself to be still busied with it. Her body was there, but her spirit was elsewhere. Presently she heard someone coming upstairs; she recognized her husband's voice; she believed he had with him one of his business friends. But she felt an uneasiness which she could not define, an agitation never caused by her husband's presence. Who was coming? Why did she tremble? Why did her heart beat so violently?

"Madame," said Dupont, as he entered, "I present to you—"

Eugénie lifted her eyes; she recognized her lover; she gave a heartbreaking cry, and fell on the floor.

"There, now! she has another attack," cried Dupont, stamping his foot with a desperate air. "This wife of mine spends her whole time having these attacks. It is dreadful! Monsieur, she has done nothing else since we were married—and Jeanneton is not here. What shall I do? I will run down and get some drops, some water. Do not leave, monsieur; I beg you, do not leave her."

The grocer went down the stairs four steps at

a time, and Adolphe was left on his knees beside Eugénie. He held up her head; he pressed her hands; he called her, but she did not hear him. She did not open her eyes, and her features were covered by a frightful pallor.

"Oh, wretch that I am!" exclaimed Adolphe, in despair; "I have killed her! I have given her her death-blow!"

"Here are some drops, and here is the orange-flower water," said the grocer, who ran in, followed by one of his shop boys.

"Eugénie, dear Eugénie, answer me, I beg you!" cried Adolphe, sustaining the young woman. He pressed her in his arms, and repulsed Dupont and Joseph, who offered him some little bottles and some lumps of sugar.

"You are a barbarian! You had no mercy for her weakness!"

"What are you talking about, monsieur?"

"My Eugénie!"

"His Eugénie! What is he talking about, Joseph?"

"Deign to look at your Adolphe!"

"Her Adolphe! Has this young man gone crazy?"

"Tell him that you love him still!"

"Listen, Joseph! He wants my wife to tell him that she loves him. Do you comprehend that?"

"Monsieur, it is the ether that he has been breathing."

"She does not understand me," said Adolphe. He pushed aside again the little bottles; in his excitement they were broken on the floor. "She will not look at me!"

"Monsieur, this is very singular."

"Monster!" cried the young man, rising, and advancing furiously upon Dupont, who recoiled in terror. "Barbarian! you are the one who has caused all our sorrows."

"Monsieur, what is the matter with you?"

"You made game of our tears, of our torments."

"What, monsieur! I haven't done anything of the sort."

"But, tremble; my fury shall light upon you."

"O my God! this young man has gone crazy! Joseph, hold him quick; he will strangle me."

Adolphe no longer knew what he was doing. He seized the grocer by the throat. The poor man cried for help, and the shop boy, terrified and not daring to approach Adolphe, ran to call assistance. Fortunately, Jeanneton arrived at this moment. She saw Eugénie stretched unconscious on the floor, and Adolphe beside himself, holding poor Dupont, whom fright had already rendered purple, a prisoner in the corner of the room. As it was evidently important to free the grocer first of all, Jeanneton ran to Adolphe, and seized him.

"What are you doing, monsieur?" she said in his ear. "Do you want to ruin my poor Eugénie? Go, go, as fast as you can; think of the

consequences of all this. In the name of my dear mistress, go, I pray you."

Jeanneton pushed Adolphe toward the door; the young man, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, glanced at Eugénie.

"Don't worry about her; I will take care of her," said Jeanneton.

Adolphe yielded at last and left the apartment, descending the staircase like a lunatic, and crossed the shop without noticing anything.

"Take care! take care!" cried Joseph to the people in the street. "He is crazy; he is as mad as a March hare." Everyone made way for Adolphe, and had no idea of running after him; as soon as he was safe out of the way Jeanneton gave her attention to Eugénie, and Dupont threw himself into a chair and unfastened his cravat.

"You saved me, my dear," he said to the maid. "I should have been choked to death if you had not come. That cursed young man! I don't know what was the matter with him; he called my wife his Eugénie, and me a barbarian. Can you imagine that, Jeanneton?"

"Oh, monsieur, you can see easily that he was crazy, that he didn't know what he was saying."

"Yes, that's what I thought. I don't see what possessed me to make him come upstairs. He was perfectly quiet down in the shop, and this all took him when my wife fainted. How is she coming on, Jeanneton?"

"Oh, badly, very badly, monsieur. This time I think you will have to go for the doctor."

Eugénie had sustained so severe a shock on seeing Adolphe that all Jeanneton's efforts failed to restore her to consciousness. The doctor declared her to be in great danger; in fact, she emerged from her swoon only to fall into a high fever and delirium, and for a fortnight she hung between life and death.

Jeanneton did not leave her mistress; day and night she was at her side. Dupont, much concerned at his wife's condition, spared nothing, that she might have the best medical advice. Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet came to inquire after the state of their daughter. The father wept at her suffering; Madame Moutonnet seemed as cold as ever, but she must have groaned inwardly, for no mother can look with indifference on her child's pain.

At last youth and nature triumphed; Eugénie was saved; but the physician declared that the convalescence would be tardy, and added that she would require the most tender care.

Dupont, relieved when his wife was pronounced out of danger, perceived that during her restoration to health he would have plenty of time to learn the articles of the code, and decided that it would be a good season for him to undertake a voyage which he had long planned in connection with his business in the south. As he would be

obliged to remain away for some months, he placed a faithful person in charge of his establishment, gave Jeanneton instructions as to her care of his wife, then entered the diligence and rode swiftly away from Paris.

On leaving Dupont's dwelling, Adolphe remained for some little time without knowing where he was, or whither he went; but at length the cool air calmed his excitement. He turned his steps toward the street where his new friends lived, knowing that he should find comfort with Charles and his wife.

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Louise, when he entered, still in disorder; "what has happened to you? What have you been doing this morning? See, Charles; he looks like a crazy person."

Adolphe described the exciting scene which had just taken place.

"But what a strange man M. Dupont must be, and stupid too, to insist on taking you to his wife. Poor Eugénie! it made her ill. But I am not surprised at that; your sudden appearance must have given her a severe shock. These things are unnecessary, M. Adolphe; when the woman you love is married, you should not try to see her. Am I not right, Charles? You will be the death of the poor little woman. And would you have been any better off if you had strangled her husband, who looks like a good-hearted man?

No, monsieur; it is unnecessary to renew the acquaintance; it would, indeed, be very wrong."

"You are right, Louise; I will not see her again, but rather avoid her, I promise you; besides, I am sure she has ceased to love me. She fainted because of the surprise, the emotion,—a feeling of repentance, perhaps. Dupont tells me she adores him."

"Yes, monsieur; to me it looks exactly like that. But whether she loves him or not, you should not disturb her and seek to cause unhappiness in her household. Do you think that would be right? Suppose her husband had been a jealous man, and had heard you call her your Eugénie, and him a monster and a barbarian. Do you think most men would take that quietly? And even if she has been inconstant, is it a noble vengeance to seek to ruin a woman in her husband's confidence? That would be very ill done. But you promise me that it shall not happen again."

"Yes, Louise, I promise you; for, whether she loves me or not, I know that I love her still."

"Oh, that is very right;—but—that's my concern; I'll take care of that. Presently you shall have some news."

"What! you will have the kindness—"

"The kindness! Much kindness truly to go and inquire as to the state of that young woman! I don't see anything marvellous in that. Besides,

I am interested in this poor Eugénie, and I shall be pleased to know — You approve, do you not, Charles?"

Charles never had any will except that of his wife; and Louise hastily put on a little bonnet, fastened a fichu round her neck, tied the string to her black apron, gave a glance at the mirror, a kiss to Charles, and started on her mission, saying to Adolphe, "Wait for me here; I shall not be gone long."

Adolphe remained with the young engraver, and, while he worked, talked to him of Eugénie, —always of Eugénie. He said he would not see her any more; he would avoid her with the greatest care; he would forget her entirely; he would pardon her inconstancy; he would pray for her happiness and peace; he would swear never to trouble her again. Charles responded to Adolphe by talking to him of Louise, of her qualities, her virtues, her spirit, her attractions, of the pleasure he took in their sweet home. They did not notice that neither answered the other. Each was so absorbed in his own theme. They could have talked in this way for a whole day.

Louise returned quite out of breath. The young woman had entered the grocer's shop to make some purchases, and had heard all the news. This was not difficult, for the morning's adventure had brought out all the kitchenmaids of the neighborhood. Everyone ran in to Dupont's to

hear Joseph's story; and no one wearied of repeating how a young man had suddenly gone mad, how Madame Dupont had fainted, and how nearly her husband had been murdered.

Louise learned that the young woman was very ill. She did not tell Adolphe this for fear he would commit some new folly. On the contrary, she reassured him as to Eugénie's condition, but resolved that she would secretly keep herself informed as to the state of affairs.

Adolphe returned to his room a little comforted. He tried to devote himself to books and study, and forget a passion which was now utterly hopeless. He spent part of his time with Charles and Louise, who were delighted to see and console him, and gave him proofs of the kindest friendship. Louise went secretly to the Dupont household many times, and, learning that Eugénie was out of danger, thought henceforth only of consoling the unhappy lover.

Sadly poor Eugénie entered upon her convalescence. The faithful Jeanneton felt a sweet happiness at this restoration, due to her tender care; but, while Eugénie showed her gratitude to her patient nurse, she seemed to regret a restoration to life, which had lost its charm for her, and all Jeanneton's efforts were needed to induce her patient to conform to the physician's rules. The poor servant, deeply distressed at seeing her mistress more sorrowful than ever, knew not what

to do to restore her cheerfulness. The sight of Adolphe had reopened all Eugénie's wounds.

"What must he think of me?" she often said to Jeanneton. "He must blame me very deeply."

"She will be disconsolate as long as she loves him," said Jeanneton to herself. "If she knew he was unfaithful to her, she might perhaps forget him. I believe to tell her will be the best means of curing her." And she decided to relate to Eugénie all she had seen, and how Adolphe had behaved while he was away from her.

"He has no right to accuse you," she said to Eugénie, "and he does not deserve to have you mourn for him so much."

At last the maid told her all she knew, all she had seen. Eugénie trembled, and turned pale as she listened; but she soon recovered her composure, and said, smiling, to her good friend,—

"You were deceived, Jeanneton. It was not he."

"What! it was not he?"

"No," she said; "you were deceived, I say; Adolphe loves me too much to forget me. Ah, I know his heart."

"But when I tell you that I saw him, that I saw him with my own eyes—"

"You believe that you saw him."

"Believe! Gracious! Well, that's too much. Gracious! The idea!"

"But why did you not tell me before?"

"I thought it would hurt your feelings too much."

"Dear Jeanneton, I know your motive. You have just invented this story, because you think it will make me forget Adolphe more easily."

"What! I invented it?"

"Yes; I thank you for all your kind friendship inspires you to say; but do not accuse Adolphe, nor make him commit imaginary crimes. I will try not to love him; but I must always respect him."

"Well, well," said Jeanneton to herself, "nothing could make her believe the truth, unless she saw it with her own two eyes. I really wish she could be convinced now." But Eugénie's faithful and pure heart could not understand how such a thing as infidelity was possible without ceasing to love; and perhaps we might say, like Dupont, that this was the result of her strict education.

CHAPTER X

Madame Saint Ceran. A Turn of Fortune's Wheel

The tender and delicious springtime had returned anew to delight the eyes and rejoice the senses. Everything was beautified by the new birth of this charming season, nature was reanimated; the earth put on all its adornments; the flowers bloomed again; the woods resumed their foliage; the fields were clothed with green; the birds returned and sang of love; the lovers walked once more beneath the shadows of the wood, making love as naturally as the birds carolled the great theme.

Charles and Louise were among those who profited by the return of the fine weather to take many walks in the country, and Adolphe often accompanied them. The sight of the felicity of the young married couple could hardly fail to affect him painfully, and augment his unsatisfied longings; sometimes as he looked into Louisa's beautiful eyes, and saw the light which shone in them and in those of her husband, his heart would fail him, and he would turn back, leaving the young couple to go on alone, for he said,

"It is not necessary for me to be always with them; I might embarrass them." And he recalled the kiss he had heard on the banks of the river.

Adolphe was not always gay, whether he walked alone or with his friends. Despite his economy, he saw his little store of money diminish day by day. Presently his modest fortune would be gone, and he would have nothing. What should he do then? He was too proud willingly to accept money of Charles; and, besides, how could he return it to him? How borrow, when there was no possibility of his being able to repay that which he had borrowed? Adolphe looked for employment on every hand, and as yet he had obtained nothing but promises. One cannot live upon promises, and each day his position became more disquieting. Louise and her husband did their best to encourage him, but Adolphe was afraid lest his melancholy should disturb this happy couple, and from motives of delicacy he visited them less often. He did not walk much for fear of meeting Eugénie; and, besides, his sorrowful thoughts led him to prefer solitude, which did not divert him, it is true, but there are some moments when one has not even the strength to seek diversion. One day he turned his steps towards the Bois de Boulogne, and, tired with walking, sat himself down not far from a lunch-counter, where lovers go to make love, and enemies to make peace. A stylish carriage passed him and paused

before the restaurant. Adolphe, little interested in what passed about him, forgot the carriage immediately, in melancholy thoughts of his own future.

He had been lost in his meditations for nearly an hour, when a tap on the shoulder caused him to turn his head, and he saw beside him a little jockey, eleven or twelve years old. The boy wore an elegant livery, and his fine and lively face showed a mischievous nature already well versed in intrigue.

"What do you wish with me?" asked Adolphe.

"Hush!" said the little jockey, putting a finger on his lip. "It is necessary to speak low. Wait; take that."

As he said this, the little man presented him a note which was only folded.

"What is that?"

"It is a note for you."

"And who sent it?"

"My mistress."

"Who is your mistress?"

"Madame Saint Ceran."

"I don't know anyone of that name."

"Apparently she knows you. I must hurry, for if monsieur sees me with you it will spoil everything."

"But what about the answer?"

"I was told not to bring an answer. Read it; read it."

The little jockey ran off, and Adolphe, much astonished at the mysterious manner of the messenger, hastily opened the note, saying, —

"I will see what an unknown lady wants with me." The writing was quite illegible, and he studied it for some time before he deciphered the following contents: —

Monsieur, I have some very important matters to communicate to you. Please come tomorrow to my house, No. 12 Rue Helder, and ask for Madame Saint Ceran. I shall expect you between eleven and twelve.

"What can she have to say to me? I never heard of the lady," said Adolphe to himself. "Oh, no doubt someone has spoken of me to her, and she wishes to employ me. Perhaps she needs a secretary. Judging from the jockey's livery, they must be rich people; but this ill-spelled epistle astonishes me. Ah, that is the reason she needs a secretary; there are some rich people who have forgotten to learn to write. Well, I will go to see what this Madame Saint Ceran wishes tomorrow."

This event roused Adolphe from his sorrowful thoughts; he returned home, thinking of the mysterious manner of the little jockey, and saying to himself, —

"If anyone wants to see me about a situation, it is strange they should wait to tell me, until I was walking in the Bois de Boulogne. But I shall know tomorrow."

The next day Adolphe tried to look his best. He polished his shoes, and carefully brushed his coat to remove its appearance of age, and then set out for the address that had been given him. He asked the portress for Madame Saint Ceran. "Go up to the first floor," she said; "madame is at home today."

Adolphe mounted to the first floor and rang. The little jockey opened the door and with a mischievous air introduced him into a parlor, where he found a maid who begged him, smiling also, to wait a moment until she spoke to her mistress.

"These people treat me very graciously," said Adolphe to himself; "it is a favorable augury."

He looked about him and admired the elegance and luxury of the furnishings, which indicated both wealth and taste.

"She certainly is a person of distinction," said Adolphe to himself; but the cursedly ill-spelled note recurred to his recollection, and upset all his ideas. The lady's maid returned.

"Madame is waiting for you," she said to Adolphe; "will you follow me?"

She led him through several apartments, and retired, after opening the door of a charming boudoir. Adolphe found himself alone with a lady in a most elegant and becoming négligé. Her back was turned so that he could not see her face.

He remained standing in the middle of the

Adolphe found himself alone with a lady in a most elegant and becoming negligee; her back was turned so that he could not see her face.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ORSON LOWELL.

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room, waiting until the lady should ask him to sit down.

Suddenly a burst of laughter was heard, and the lady, rising suddenly, ran into the young man's arms. He was petrified to recognize the dancer of the boulevards in Madame Saint Ceran!

"Yes, it is I," said Zélie, laughing again at Adolphe's surprise. "I knew I should astonish you. But it is really I."

"And do I see you here?" exclaimed Adolphe, not yet able to grasp the situation.

"Yes, my good friend; it is not so very astonishing either. I have been fortunate; that is all. It is common enough in our life. But sit down here beside me."

Adolphe, stunned by what he saw, allowed Zélie to lead him to a seat, and she placed herself beside him.

"And is this your apartment?" he asked.

"Yes; it is not much like the little room where I used to live; but I have found a man who gives me all this and a thousand crowns a month, without counting his presents. You may imagine I did not refuse him."

"Oh, I can easily understand; this man assures your happiness, and you ought to love him exceedingly."

"What! I detest him!"

"You detest him?"

"I hate him worse than death!"

"Hate a man who has made your fortune!"

"How can I help it? Love is not to be commanded. You, monsieur, have treated me shamefully; you would not even open your door for me, and I adore you. Yes, you may shrug your shoulders, if you want to. I am a fool about you, and I would do anything to pass a few moments with you."

Adolphe could not help laughing at Zélie's declaration.

"Laugh, monsieur," she said; "I don't mind, so long as you don't reproach me for having brought you here."

"It is certain that if I had suspected you were Madame Saint Ceran —"

"You would not have come. Well, that's very amiable, I must say. I just thought so, and I was careful not to sign my name. Yesterday I saw you in the Bois de Boulogne, seated at the foot of a tree, your eyes fixed on heaven, and dreaming, no doubt, of your loves. I was with my gentleman; but I could not resist the desire to write to you. So we went into a restaurant. I sent him down to order his dinner, and I slipped into a little side-room and wrote the note to you, which I sent by my little jockey, whom I can trust. I hardly slept a wink last night, because I was going to see monsieur, the gentleman who makes faces at me and never gives me a pleasant word. Perhaps that is why I love you and adore you."

Zélie finished her remarks with caresses, which at first Adolphe found very displeasing, though he could not remain entirely unaffected by Zélie's evident fondness; besides, Eugénie was married, and Louise had advised him to amuse himself. One knows what amuses a young lover of twenty.

But after he had been sufficiently amused by Zélie, he said, "Is your friend really not amiable and charming?"

"Oh, horrors! He tires me to death! He is frightful! He is ugly, deformed, shocking!"

"And he is old?"

"He is a hundred at least."

"Oh, by Jove!"

"It is torture for me to be with him."

As Zélie finished speaking, the young chambermaid ran in, quite disturbed.

"What is it?" asked Zélie.

"Monsieur has come in!" she cried. "Jules was watching out of the window, and he saw him leave the cab. He is coming up now."

"The devil take him! He never comes as early as this. Dear friend, I'll have to hide you quickly."

"Hide me! But I'd prefer to go."

"Impossible! He would see you go out."

"What does it matter to me that he should see me go out?"

"But it matters greatly to me. Here; enter this glass cabinet. He never goes in there; but anyway, I will take the key."

"But I do not wish to."

"Ah, my dear friend; for a moment. I promise to send him away immediately. You would make things unpleasant."

"Go in, monsieur; go in quickly."

The two young women pushed Adolphe into a cabinet connected with the boudoir, the glass door of which was covered with a yellow silk curtain. The maid disappeared quickly and Zélie stretched herself on a sofa, where she assumed the attitude of one in great suffering, while her face took on the same expression.

Adolphe resigned himself to his fate, and seated himself; but, feeling a desire to see the man of whom Zélie had drawn such a repulsive portrait, he softly lifted a corner of the curtain, and saw all that passed in the boudoir.

Zélie held her head as though she suffered greatly. The door opened, and Adolphe could not restrain his surprise as he saw a young man of about thirty enter the boudoir. He was tall, well-built, with a handsome face and a distinguished carriage. He seated himself by Zélie, whom he greeted with a pleasant smile. Adolphe rubbed his eyes; he thought he must be mistaken; he listened. The young man addressed his mistress with the most tender words, and overwhelmed her with attentions.

"What! you are ill, my dear?" he exclaimed, taking Zélie's hand and pressing it between his own.

"Oh, yes; I am ill, I suffer horribly. I did not sleep a wink last night."

"But yesterday you did not think—"

"No; it took me all of a sudden. Oh, it is cruel to suffer like this."

"It is a headache, I suspect."

"Yes, I have a headache; I ache all over."

"Why did you leave your bed?"

"Oh, I was so tired of staying in bed, and I am comfortable on this lounge."

"I am so annoyed. I had hoped to spend the day with you."

"But you see it is impossible."

"I have taken a box at the Varieties."

"You will go without me."

"I shall be bored to death without you. See; I have brought you some finery."

The young man drew from his pocket a beautiful cashmere scarf, which he spread upon Zélie's knees, and a lace veil.

"Oh, your finery is very pretty."

"If it pleases you I am very fortunate."

"Yes, it pleases me very much and I thank you."

The former dancer deigned to accompany these words with a half-smile, and then carried her hands to her head, with an expression of great suffering.

"You still suffer, I perceive."

"Horribly. I have not the strength to speak."

"I will leave you; try to rest a little. I will return this evening to see how you are."

"Oh, it is not necessary to trouble yourself so much."

"Good-by, my dear; I will order Lucie and Jules not to disturb you and to let nobody in to see you."

"Oh, I shall be very much obliged to you."

The young man kissed Zélie and went out upon his tiptoes, trying to make as little noise as possible. Presently Lucie appeared, to announce that he had entered the carriage; and Zélie, convulsed with laughter, ran to open the door of the cabinet.

"Well," she said to Adolphe, who looked at her with astonishment, "you have seen him, and now you know him."

"What! is that the man you call so old, so ugly, so deformed, so repulsive?"

"My dear friend, he is all that in my eyes, because he pays! Remember what I say,—if you ever ruin yourself for a woman, don't expect her to love you."

"I don't think that will ever happen to me," said Adolphe; "but I thank you for the warning."

"But I love you truly, Adolphe, and I am sure you are not happy."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, my friend, we women see those things at a glance. Besides, your coat is worn, and you are wearing your last year's hat. So I know you are having some bad luck."

"What do you mean? How does my luck concern you?"

"Why, it concerns me greatly. I want you to be happy. I want you to have everything. Here; take this hundred louis, and when you want more come to me."

Adolphe felt a vivid red color his cheeks. He pushed away Zélie's hand. "Keep your gold. I thank you for the interest you accord me, but I could not accept your services. The source of your riches would disgrace him who shared them. A man can without being blamed ruin himself for you, but one would be degraded in receiving your presents."

"Oh, there, he is angry!" cried Zélie, running after Adolphe, who was hastening from her. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"I know it; I forgive you. Good-by!"

"But why are you in such a hurry?"

"I have some very pressing business."

"I shall see you again; at least, promise me you will not leave me like this."

"I will see you again when I have a hat and coat of the newest fashion, so that I shall not be humiliated by your offers of aid," and, without waiting to hear more, Adolphe left Zélie, and took his departure from the dwelling of Madame Saint Ceran.

"How strange are the freaks of Fortune!" said Adolphe, on leaving the Rue de Helder;

"too often does she prostitute her favors. Why are her gifts not always the reward of virtue, of merit, or of talent? Why do we so often see the honest man sunk in poverty, and the rogue wallowing in opulence? the virtuous woman in need, and the wanton with abundance? talent on foot, and mediocrity in a chariot? How is it that those whom birth and chance have made the possessors of that which would render a hundred families happy, employ their superabundance so foolishly, when so many honest people are in want of the necessaries of life? Why do the rich find the means of incessantly augmenting their wealth, while the laborious mechanic hardly gains enough to feed his children? A thousand crowns a month for Zélie! What an abuse of riches! But how many women receive more for submitting sometimes to the caresses of men whom they take pleasure in deceiving! These ladies make their fortunes easily, while the poor father of a family, employed at a salary of twelve hundred francs,—who, in order to obtain a position, has for many years tramped the pavements of the capital, and run about to solicit the influence of ministers,—at eight o'clock has to be at his office, which he cannot leave before four, for he dreads that in consequence of some reform he may lose his employment, in which event he would be reduced to downright beggary.

"Mademoiselle Zélie used to live in a little

attic; now she rooms in a hotel. She used to submit to be beaten by a miscreant; she now hardly deigns to respond to the urgent devotion of a man who does everything to please her. The one used to rob her; the other overwhelms her with presents. But she was faithful to the former, and laughs at the latter; and the young man lavishes riches upon her, which she offers to another!—for it must be confessed that she is not self-interested. But she will have her lover live in great style; she will deny herself nothing; all the enjoyments of luxury shall be exhausted; she will abuse every pleasure, while honest married people dare not allow themselves, twice a year, seats in the fourth boxes at the Opera. O Fortune, thou art blind!"

Thus soliloquized Adolphe, while walking in the direction of Rue Saint Paul. His late adventure naturally suggested such reflections. When one sees a young married couple rise at daybreak to work, and never permit themselves a costly pleasure; when one himself runs about for a long time in quest of employment, at the most moderate compensation,—he can hardly refrain from a certain feeling of vexation on seeing Fortune heaping her favors on a woman, because she has made pretty faces while dancing a caper or turning a pirouette. "Ah," said Adolphe to himself, "if I could only turn a pirouette, I should long since have found occupation; but, unfortunately, I am no great dancer. What, then, must I do to earn

my livelihood? I can write, cipher, and speak a little Latin; with such an education I shall never make my fortune."

The morning's adventure, however, had distracted the young man's attention; and, on seeing him, Louise believed that something fortunate had happened to him.

"Look, sweetheart," she said to Charles; "only see how happy Adolphe is looking. He has got a position, I am sure."

"You are mistaken, dear Louise," said Adolphe; "on the contrary, I have now less hope than ever, and I have just had fresh evidence of the fact that it is to those who merit it least that Fortune accords her favors."

"And is that the reason why you appear less sad than usual?"

"What would you have? Excess of misfortune sometimes gives courage. I have not yet reached so low a stage, seeing that I possess such friends as you; but I have formed my resolution. I find it does not do to blush at one's wretchedness. I will do anything that offers, it matters not what, so that I preserve my honor, my only wealth. Some days ago I was offered the work of weighing goods in the warehouse of the stout merchant, your neighbor; I refused it then, but now I will accept it."

"You, Monsieur Adolphe,—a place like that! Always with wagoners, carters!"

"I will come in the evening to rest beside you, from the labors and worries of the day; we become adapted to everything, and get accustomed to hardship, — carrying sometimes parcels, burdens. If I have only strength enough, that is all I need."

"You'll make yourself sick."

"Then you will take care of me; you have already saved my life, and I have got into the habit of counting upon you."

"But wait a little."

"What! until I have no other resource. That would seem to me to be harder still. No, my resolution is taken; tomorrow I shall offer myself."

Adolphe passed the day with Charles and his wife; the picture of their love, of their happiness, reconciled him in some measure with Providence. "Ah," said he, "if they are not rich they are at least happy, and assuredly happier than Madame Saint Ceran." He left his kind friends and returned to his home, fully resolved to offer himself as warehouseman next day. "Had I been wiser," said he to himself, on retiring for the night, "I should still be in the novelty shop. But then I saw only Eugénie; for her I would have forsaken all — ah, even still! What am I saying? Now she is married; she is rich; she is happy. Ah, should I regret that I am not her husband? What had I to offer her? Indigence, misery! No,

I could not have married her. Then, it is all for the best. Nevertheless, Charles and Louise are not rich, yet they are happy; but then, they were born in the laboring class, where work is pleasure. They have each a status. But what should Eugénie and I have done? Ah, why did we ever become acquainted? What induced me to go to that fête, to that wood at Romainville? I have never been there since; but tomorrow I shall still be free; tomorrow I will go and see again that spot where she told me she loved me; I will go and bid it a last adieu."

Next day, however, while preparing to go out, he thought that he ought not to go to the wood of Romainville. What should he find there? Memories that would feed the flame which he should strive to extinguish. "No, let me not go there," said he; "I should return more wretched than ever. With Eugénie, I would have often gone there, and would always have experienced new pleasure; but alone, I should feel only regret without a ray of hope."

He had gone out to solicit the position which he had decided to accept, when the porter stopped him to give him a letter.

"A letter for me?" asked Adolphe; "and who would write one? Can it be Madame Saint Ceran?"

He examined the handwriting, which was unknown to him, and finally broke the seal.

The letter was from a Paris notary, who requested M. Adolphe Dalmont to come as soon as possible to his office on important business, which nearly concerned him.

"What business can I have with a notary?" said the young man to himself; "I have no money, and I am not in debt to anybody. Can it be the offer of a situation? Ah, let me not flatter myself; I thought as much as I was going to Zélie's. Let us go, however, to the notary's. I shall still have time enough to apply for the place of warehouseman."

Adolphe wended his way toward the house indicated to him, fully persuaded that he went on a fruitless errand. He entered an office in which a dozen young men measured him with their eyes from head to foot without leaving their seats. Adolphe's dress did not betoken the capitalist; no one put himself about for him; they merely pointed to the room of the second clerk. But the second clerk was not there; he had just left in a cab on business of the office, and as in doing the business of the office the young men also did their own, it was probable that the second clerk would not return for a long time. They then directed Adolphe to the head clerk's office. He went there and found nobody; the head clerk had gone to take an oyster luncheon at the Rocher de Cancale, with a client whose funds he had advantageously invested. "But might I not speak with

the notary himself?" asked Adolphe of the youths about him.

"He is engaged at present," they replied; "there is a banker with him, who has come to deposit his balance, of which he offers twenty per cent to his creditors. You see very well that you cannot interrupt this interview; but if you will wait—"

"I will wait," said Adolphe; and he sat down in a corner of the office, where he amused himself by reading the names of the notaries of Paris, while the young men around him continued a conversation which his arrival had not even interrupted.

"You didn't come to yesterday's soirée. The ball was charming — lovely women — oceans of punch — the landlord managed well; and then there was écarté — what an infernal game! Durosay lost eight hundred francs."

"How, Durosay, our neighbor's second clerk? Where the deuce did he get the money?"

"They say an Englishwoman supplies him."

"An Englishwoman? Ah, it's delicious! To ruin an Englishwoman is patriotic."

"I won two hundred francs from Blanval. He's well off, is Blanval. He's a jolly fellow; he'll only play for gold; he's going to be a stockbroker."

"I went yesterday with three colleagues to dine at the Beauvilliers. Douval played; he got three hundred francs as a douceur for the sale of that

farm of the Gatinais. Oh, what a dinner! We made the hundred crowns fly. We had before agreed that we should devour it all to the last franc."

"Parbleu! it would be no great matter for four to guzzle a hundred crowns, and you did not drink Constance for table wine — did you?"

"Oh, we had excellent wine, raw oysters, truffles, stuffed pheasants, stews, all sorts of jellies. At last poor Douval fell under the table. We had to carry him to a cab to take him home."

"For my part, boys, I've been wiser than you; I had a rendezvous with the little girl who works in the opposite shop, and took her to the theatre."

"To a close box, you rascal!"

"No, the little fool wouldn't go up the stair; she said it was too high, and she should see nothing. It was in vain that I told her she'd be more at home there; she wouldn't yield, and we had to go to an open box, and listen in silence to three plays that I knew by heart. Imagine how much I enjoyed myself."

"Ah, Gustave, poor fellow! what a spectacle you must have been! But on your way back?"

"On the way back I thought we should take a carriage; but we found at the door a great booby of a brother, who was disposed to accompany us. Oh, how unlucky! I put them both into a cab, and, feigning that I had to leave them for a mo-

ment, I took to my heels, leaving the brother and sister to settle with the cabman."

"Ah, ah! that was delicious! The little prude well deserved that lesson."

The conversation of the young men was here interrupted; they heard their master's door open and resumed their work. The notary was taking leave of the banker, and Adolphe, curious to see the person whom he supposed to be disconsolate at the deranged state of his affairs, raised his eyes and saw a young exquisite, smiling graciously, and with nothing about him to show that he was in trouble. But what a new surprise! Adolphe recognized this person's face; it was indeed he,— the very man who lavished a thousand crowns monthly on Zélie, and had just offered twenty per cent to his creditors.

"And I was pitying him yesterday for being duped," said Adolphe to himself. "I now pardon Zélie, and begin to see some resemblance in the portrait she gave me of him."

The notary was about to reënter his room when Adolphe approached him, holding in his hand the letter which he had received that morning.

"You wrote me, monsieur, and I have come to inquire for what reason."

"Your name, if you please, monsieur?"

"Adolphe Dalmont."

"M. Adolphe Dalmont! Ah, monsieur, I have

been impatiently awaiting you. Please come with me into my room."

The notary addressed Adolphe in the most polite and respectful accents, and hastened to give him a chair near his desk; while the young men in the office, who had been so disregardful of his presence a few moments before, now remarked to one another, "It's Adolphe Dalmont! Who would have believed it?"

Our young friend, greatly surprised at this murmur, and at the ceremonies with which the old notary overwhelmed him, awaited an explanation of the enigma with impatience.

"You are Monsieur Adolphe Dalmont, the only son of Adrien Dalmont, and nephew of his brother, Georges Dalmont?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"It would be easy for you to get a certificate of your own birth and that of your father?"

"I already have them, monsieur."

"Your father died quite recently at Senlis?"

"Yes, monsieur, but who told you —"

"Ah, monsieur, for many months I have been seeking for you. I wrote to Besançon, but they did not know your father's place of abode; at length I learned that it was at Senlis. I wrote; he had just died. I was aware that he left a son; this son, they said, had returned to Paris. I sought for him, I advertised for him in the papers."

"I never read them, sir."

"I lost hope of ever finding you; but, by a strange chance, my wife has a servant, whose husband has an uncle who is clerk in a lace shop."

"At M. Moutonnet's?"

"Precisely so; the old clerk, who, it appears, is a gossip, has spoken to his nephew of the love affairs of M. Adolphe Dalmont with a young lady named Eugénie; the nephew told them to his wife, who, in disrobing her mistress, mentioned your name. There, monsieur; that is how I found you out."

"But why, monsieur, did you search for me?"

"I beg pardon; in fact, it is with that I should have begun. It was to put you in possession of an inheritance bequeathed to you by your uncle, who died at Batavia when he was making arrangements to return to France, nearly eighteen months ago."

"What, monsieur! my uncle Georges—"

"Has left about eleven hundred thousand francs, which he had amassed on an indigo plantation."

"Eleven hundred thousand francs!"

"Yes, monsieur; he died a bachelor, and you are his sole heir. Intending to return to France, he had some time ago forwarded here a portion of his fortune, of which you can soon be possessed."

Adolphe seemed still to be listening to the notary, who had ceased speaking; he doubted if he

was awake. Eleven hundred thousand francs! — when he was in distress, when he was going to solicit the place of warehouseman! Only last evening he was upbraiding Fortune, and, behold! he was now rich, — rich for life, and in a position to make others happy.

He could no longer breathe; he was suffocating. There is nothing so hard to endure as great joy, for it seems that our organs adapt themselves better to pain than to pleasure.

"Compose yourself, monsieur," said the notary, smiling at Adolphe's amazement. "Eleven hundred thousand francs is certainly a pretty fortune, but you are not yet a millionaire. At five per cent it will be fifty-five thousand livres of income."

"Ah, monsieur, it is quite enough; it is too much — it is! I had nothing, sir,— nothing; and now I shall be able — Ah, if I had had this splendid fortune some months sooner, I should have been able to marry her; I should have — "

"Monsieur, with your inheritance I warrant you will find a better match than when you had nothing. With an income of nearly sixty thousand livres, you can boldly aspire to the hand of a woman who will bring you twice as much, and then you will be in a grand situation."

"Ah, monsieur, you do not understand me. — But I must go."

"Collect all your titles, all your family papers,

and in a very few days more I shall put you in possession of your inheritance; you are the sole heir; it will go alone —"

"Yes, sir; I am off."

"Monsieur, if you are in immediate need of money —"

But Adolphe no longer listened to the notary who was showing him out; he crossed the office through the midst of the clerks, who had all risen and respectfully saluted him. Adolphe saw nothing, took no notice of anything around him; he burned to be with his friends, to share with them his good fortune. Rushing out, he called the first cab he saw.

"Rue Saint Paul!" he shouted. "A hundred sous if you take me there in five minutes."

"You shall be there in four, master."

And the cabman lashed the horses, made the sparks flash from the pavement, roared "Look out!" in a terrible voice, caused the terrified pedestrians to scurry, all to gain the promised hundred sous, which that morning would have seemed to Adolphe sufficient to support him for a week; but when one has just inherited eleven hundred thousand francs, when one passes suddenly from destitution to opulence, it may be well allowed him to view things in a different light; and Adolphe, who on the preceding evening had made such sagacious reflections on the employment of riches, seemed already disposed to throw all he

had out of the windows. It is always so with men; they cry, criticise, blame, lament; but let Fortune change, and they change with her, and will fall tomorrow into the same excesses that they blame today.

The cabman lashed up his horses so well that he reached the goal in a quarter of an hour, which is rather more than four minutes; it is not, however, too long to go from Rue Saint Honoré to Rue Saint Paul. Adolphe leaped from the carriage, gave the crown to the driver, and darted into the house of his young friends. He mounted the stairs four steps at a time, found the key in the door, and entered like a madman. Louise and Charles, seated at a little table, were about beginning their luncheon. Adolphe ran to embrace Louise, threw his arms around Charles's neck; then, taking each of them by the hand, he made them dance round the table. Louise looked first at him, then at her husband; surprise, grief, were pictured in her eyes.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" she exclaimed; "ah, mon Dieu! Again he does not know what he is doing. He must have been at the grocer's."

"Adolphe, my friend, compose yourself," said Charles.

Adolphe laughed, and continued to dance while he cried, —

"Eleven hundred thousand francs! No more fears for the future! You may have ten, twelve

children! I will bring them up,—every one of them."

"Ah, my goodness! he's worse than ever," said Louise. "Do you hear, Charles? He wishes me to have twelve children."

At length Adolphe became aware of the fact that the more he made his friends dance, the sadder they grew. Louise was weeping; Charles was keenly regarding him; he guessed their fear and hastened to dispel it, by explaining to them everything. While he was talking the young couple still doubted, but he showed them the notary's letter; then their fears were replaced by the liveliest, frankest joy, a feeling only too rare. After having again embraced one another, and again having danced for a moment, they at length grew calm, and began to speak rationally.

"My good friends, it is to you that I owe this good fortune," said Adolphe.

"To us?"

"Certainly. Recall that evening when I wished to throw myself into the water; had it not been for you, I should not now be alive, and consequently could not inherit."

"Well, what about that?"

"What about it! You must have your share of my riches."

"No, Monsieur Adolphe, no; we will have nothing to do with it. We rejoice in your happiness; that you may always love us is all that we

desire. Do you imagine for a moment that it was in the hope of a reward that we rescued you from your despair?"

"My dear Charles, you don't know what you are saying; you did the good action solely for the pleasure of helping a fellow-creature; for you saved my life without being acquainted with me. Would you then prevent me from making a proper employment of my fortune? I have an income of sixty thousand livres; I will give you twenty."

"No, monsieur; I will not take it."

"Fifteen."

"No, monsieur."

"Ten?"

"No, monsieur."

"Ah, what a man! Very well; I will buy you a first-rate stock for an engraver; I will arrange your shop; I will decorate it; I will fit it up with everything necessary; and I will advance you the funds required to start you in your enterprises. Will that suit you?"

"But—"

"If you refuse, I leave,—go far away; you shall see me no more."

"No, no; we accept," said Louise; "we accept—don't we, Charles? It does not do to be foolishly proud, above all towards one's friends. Yes, certainly; we accept the shop."

"Ah! isn't that splendid? O my friends, you

do me great service in assisting me to make a good use of my riches. I begin to realize that that is a more difficult thing than we suppose. For if all honest people are as scrupulous as you, I believe that I shall have to throw my money in the faces of the sharpers and loose women. But you will never leave me; you will always be my loyal, my only friends. There was once a person who should have shared my happiness; but I see her no more; she is rich; I can do nothing for her. It is for you, then, to aid me with your counsels, to guide me, and to prevent me from acting foolishly."

"Oh, you won't do that; you are too sensible for that."

"My dear Louise, it's a very difficult matter for a young man to be sensible, when, by his circumstances, he is compelled to deny himself all pleasures; but there is considerable merit in being so when he possesses all the means of gratifying his passions. I will, however, do my utmost at all times to please you. But, look you; what am I to do with my money? Eleven hundred thousand francs! It is really frightful! I will have a nice house in Paris and another in the country, where we shall go to pass the summer—"

"And work?" said Charles; "and our shop, —who'll take care of it?"

"Someone who is reliable, faithful, and upon whom we can always reckon. I will then pur-

chase a landed property, and I shall need a manager, a steward."

"Be careful, Monsieur Adolphe; it will be difficult to choose."

"Ah, I have already chosen; I have found the man, — that is, if he will accept. But he will accept; I will give him thrice his present salary."

"To whom?"

"To Bidois, — to Madame Moutonnet's old clerk. He has often angered me, but I forgive him. He will speak to me about her. It is decided; I shall engage Bidois as manager."

"Poor young man!" whispered Louise to her husband; "he still loves her. What constancy! Ah, he well deserves the fortune that has come to him."

"Besides," continued Adolphe, "I justly owe that to Bidois, for it was through his loquacity that the notary succeeded in finding me. At least I shall have with me one that has known her, who will understand me when I talk of her."

"But, consider that you desire to forget her."

"Yes, my friends; often do I wish to do so; I wish it every moment, but I cannot always do so. And then — I will confess to you my weakness: I shall be very glad that Madame Moutonnet should know that I am rich, — much richer than Dupont. She will perhaps be sorry that she treated me so badly."

"Oh, as to that, you are right, and it will be

well done, if she repent of having been so wicked."

"There! everything is arranged, settled; we shall have a fine estate, a shop, a house. I run to collect all the documents I shall require, and soon these charming projects will be realized."

Adolphe took leave of his kind friends, and hastened to business. How different were his thoughts now from those of last night! But since last night what a change had taken place in his circumstances!

Louise and her husband were almost as much astounded as Adolphe himself at this turn of fortune; they were in no condition to work for the rest of the day; at dinner they had no appetite; they could only look at each other and sigh deeply; for gladness, as well as sorrow, makes us sigh.

At night they could not sup in their usual manner.

"We are rich," said Louise.

"We shall have a fine shop," answered Charles. "Ah, sweetheart, what happiness! what a happy lot! what pleasure!"

They lay down at last, but they could not sleep; slumber fled the eyelids of these young people, who before that used to rest so peacefully.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" said Louise to her husband; "is this the way when one is rich? Oh,

how very queer it is to be incessantly excited, to be no longer able to work, eat, sleep! Ah, it must be because we are not yet used to it."

None the less the youthful couple were still lovers, and though sleep fled their eyelids, love remained.

"Ah!" exclaimed Louise, in her husband's embrace, "how lucky it is that Fortune cannot deprive us of love!"

CHAPTER XI

Bidois Obtains a New Situation

Thanks to the great promptitude with which Adolphe produced the papers which established his birth and his relationship to Georges Dalmont, he immediately entered into possession of his brilliant inheritance, and was free to make such use of it as he pleased.

If fortune does not produce happiness, it is necessary to acknowledge that at least it contributes greatly to it. With facilities for satisfying all one's tastes, all one's desires, why should one not experience relief from his sorrows? It happened thus with Adolphe; he still loved Eugénie, but he was no longer in despair because he did not possess her; he thought often of her and longed to see her, but he also made other acquaintances and amused himself frequently as young men have ever amused themselves. His friends, Charles and Louise, not unreasonably hoped that time would do the rest.

Adolphe had bought a pretty little house in Paris, which he intended should be for himself and his friends; he did not wish to have strangers under his roof. He also purchased, through the

agency of his lawyer, a considerable landed property about twenty-five leagues from Paris, which consisted of a small château, some farms, woods and fields, and which would produce an income of about forty thousand livres.

Adolphe put into the hands of Louise the furnishing and decorating of his Paris house. The little woman was not born to wealth, but she had excellent taste and a fine sense of order, which were all that Adolphe needed; besides, Charles and his wife were his only friends, and to them he always turned for counsel. Had he wished to surround himself with flatterers, intriguers and parasites, he might easily have had a crowd of friends; but these did not tempt Adolphe.

Louise had not a moment's rest; she ran about all day among painters, decorators and upholsterers, and had, in addition, the task of choosing and installing Adolphe's servants. Charles pouted a little, because he scarcely saw his wife during the daytime; but Adolphe laughed at his disappointment, and said to him,—

"You will see her this evening."

Charles responded, "That is not enough." Sometimes he regretted their quiet days of work and love.

At last Adolphe's house was furnished, decorated, and ready to receive its master. With money, in Paris, one can imitate the scene-shifting of the Opera. Gold is the magic wand which

works all metamorphoses. Adolphe was desirous that his friends should reside with him; but Charles would not consent to that, fearing that neither he nor his wife would feel quite at their ease; and Louise thought with her husband that they had not been born to play the parts of society people, and that in continuing to work they should render themselves more worthy of fortune's favors.

"They are incorrigible," said Adolphe; "they wish to do nothing but work, and how can I be happy alone in my house? I shall be bored to death."

"You must visit your property, — your farms and your woods."

"You are right; but, first of all, I must see you established."

Adolphe offered an engraver double the value of his stock to induce him to sell out, and the offer was accepted. The shop, already a pretty one, was redecorated with mirrors and ornaments, and arranged in the most charming fashion by our young man, who led the couple to their new dwelling and said to them, "Now you are at home."

Charles scolded, declaring everything was too fine, too expensive, too showy; he was almost in a bad humor. Louise at length appeased him; a pretty woman is so quickly accustomed to seeing her image repeated by mirrors on every side.

"My dear," she said to Charles, "we must humor him a little, and do as he wishes."

"Charles," said Adolphe, "when you begged me not to throw myself into the water, I obeyed you, though the point then in question was far more important than the one which now occupies us. When one has done for another what you have done for me, one has not the right to refuse any expression of gratitude. Let this discussion be the last between us."

The young men embraced each other, while Louise ran all over the shop and the apartment connected with it, examining, ferreting out and admiring everything. She came back delighted, jumping and dancing; and, with tears in her eyes, she kissed Adolphe, and said to him in a tremulous voice, "What have we done that we should be so happy?"

Adolphe pressed her in his arms, and then left his friends to take possession of their property.

Adolphe had still another project which he was eager to execute; but would Bidois consent to leave a house where he had been so long employed? As one grows old, one's happiness lies in doing that which is habitual. Adolphe despatched one of his valets in search of information regarding the lace dealer's household, who brought to his master the news that Madame Moutonnet was about to retire from business, and had sold her stock, which, in a few weeks, would pass into

other hands. Adolphe, delighted at this circumstance, which favored his plans, sent to beg the old clerk to come to his house.

At the sight of a servant in livery, who came in his master's carriage to seek him, old Bidois thought he was dreaming, and could not persuade himself that it was he who was asked for. The valet, who had received orders from Adolphe not to mention his name, induced the old clerk to follow him, promising to bring him back in the carriage, that he might not be long absent.

"It must be to give some orders," said Bidois to himself. He apprised M. Moutonnet, since Madame Moutonnet was away, and decided to get into the carriage, still having his pen behind his ear.

As the carriage rolled along, Bidois questioned the servant.

"What is your master?" he asked him.

"A young man who has an income of fifty thousand livres."

"A gentleman of position, — of birth; he probably wants some valences for his house."

"I don't think so; it is all newly furnished."

"Then it must be for one of his country houses."

"Well, I think I have heard him speak of an estate in the country."

"I was sure of it; you ought to have let me bring some samples. You'll see I shall be obliged to go back."

The carriage stopped, and Bidois descended, the elegance of the house giving him a very exalted idea of the master who lived in it; still he could not imagine why he had been sent for instead of Madame Moutonnet. He was at last introduced into the drawing-room, and the valet said to him, "There is my master."

Adolphe was seated in an armchair, and was amused at the figure Bidois made standing erect before him, looking at him and not wishing to recognize him.

"It is I, Bidois," said Adolphe at last. At the sound of his voice the old clerk took three steps backward.

"It is I, Adolphe Dalmont, whom you treated very unkindly not long ago." Bidois retreated still farther. "It is I, at whom you lately made so droll a face, when I passed the shop shortly after my return to Paris."

Bidois continued to retreat, looking towards the door, ready to fly; for he was persuaded that Adolphe had sent for him to take vengeance upon him for all the ill turns he had done him.

"Compose yourself, my dear Bidois; I am far from bearing any malice towards you," earnestly added Adolphe, wishing to remove the terror which he read in the old bachelor's eyes. "You acted according to Madame Moutonnet's orders, and certainly it was your duty to pay more attention to her wishes than to the thoughtlessness of

a lover. But listen to me; I have become wealthy. I own a fine property about twenty-five leagues from here; there are farms and outlying lands, and I need a steward, — a manager who will make my interests his care, — and I offer the place to you."

"What! to me, monsieur?" cried Bidois, bowing to the ground before Adolphe.

"Yes, to you. What salary had you with Madame Moutonnet?"

"I had eight hundred francs a year, besides table and lodging."

"I will give you a thousand crowns with the same privileges. The other servants will be under your orders, and you will act in my place in my absence."

"A thousand crowns!" Bidois bowed, and remained with his head bent to the earth.

"Yes, a thousand crowns; and that is not too much to pay you, for I know your honesty and fidelity. I could find stewards at fifteen hundred francs, but they would steal from me more than six thousand francs a year; while, with you, I am sure of cent for cent."

"Oh, your honor, I am confused."

"No titles, Bidois; I am always just Adolphe Dalmont."

"But I must explain to you that I am only good at addition."

"That is all that is necessary, my friend. I

would much rather have addition than subtraction. Be easy; you can attend to all my affairs without any difficulty; with you I am sure they will never be in disorder. Make your arrangements and preparations. I do not wish you to leave Madame Moutonnet too suddenly."

"Sir, Monsieur Dalmont, Adolphe, I shall be free in a fortnight; the stock is sold, and —"

"Very well; in a fortnight you will come and settle yourself here, and together we will go all over the estate. Wait, Bidois; here is your bonus."

Adolphe slipped twenty louis into Bidois' hand. Unable to express his gratitude, he began to bow again; but the young man put an end to this by descending the staircase and showing the old clerk to his servants assembled in a lower hall. "Here is my steward," he said to them; "you will obey him as if he were myself."

The domestics bowed before the new manager, and Bidois no longer knew where he was. He smiled, repeated his thanks, put his pen in his mouth, removed and replaced his hat, turned on all sides, beginning phrases which he did not finish; but Adolphe brought the scene to a conclusion by helping him into the carriage, which quickly carried the new steward to his old place.

Madame Moutonnet was quite irritated at the absence of her clerk, and thought it very extraordinary that he should go out without her per-

mission. She scolded her husband for having allowed it, and M. Moutonnet listened in silence to his wife's reproaches. At length a carriage stopped before the shop, and Bidois descended, and entered with an air of assurance, his head high, his glance proud, slamming the door behind him, a thing he had not done before in the fifteen years that he had lived with Madame Moutonnet.

"Where do you come from, Monsieur Bidois?" asked the lace dealer's wife in a severe tone. "Why did you go out during working hours without my permission? You have been absent more than twenty-five minutes."

Bidois threw himself, without response, upon the bench belonging to the counter, and, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his brow, and took a pinch of snuff.

"Do you not hear me, Monsieur Bidois?" repeated Madame Moutonnet, in a louder tone; while her husband said to his clerk,—

"Bidois, my wife asks where you have been."

"Where have I been? Where have I been?" replied Bidois, at last. "You will know presently; give me time to get my breath."

"What does he say? What does this impertinent tone mean?"

"Impertinent, madame! Modify your expressions, I beg of you."

"He dares to impose silence on me! Answers me—tells me to hold my tongue! Is it

really Bidois that I hear? Do you see how he looks at me, Monsieur Moutonnet?"

"Bidois, did you have lunch in the city? My friend, I have never seen you stare so."

"This rascal is certainly drunk."

"Rascal! I! Get drunk! Madame Moutonnet, please respect the steward, the manager, the confidential agent of M. Adolphe Dalmont, who has an income of a hundred thousand livres; who has estates, farms, woods and cattle for me to take care of, and to whom you refused your daughter."

"What is he talking about? Do you understand him, Monsieur Moutonnet?"

"My heart, he said something about cattle."

"An income of a hundred thousand livres! Monsieur Adolphe Dalmont! He was a worthless fellow that I would not allow my daughter to have anything to do with."

"He is a worthless fellow, is he, and he gives me a place with a salary of a thousand crowns and perquisites. Your judgment was bad, madame."

"Please explain yourself, Bidois."

Bidois recounted his interview with Adolphe, and, as is usual in such cases, he exaggerated all he had seen. The house became a palace, the country place a château, the revenue was immense, and his master a nobleman. He ended his recital by the display of the pretty little bonus he had received.

Madame Moutonnet made him repeat all this three times, and each time that Bidois recommenced he increased the fortune of Adolphe, who soon became the Marquis of Carabbas. Madame Moutonnet uttered many exclamations, and looked at her husband, who did not know what to say, and waited to hear his wife's opinion.

"Good Heavens! Do you hear, monsieur? An estate, a château, immense properties!"

"Yes, my love."

"A carriage, a coach, forests!"

"Forests, sweetheart."

"And you say nothing, Monsieur Moutonnet."

"But what should I say, my dear?"

"But, monsieur, he might have been our son-in-law. My daughter would have been a duchess instead of a grocer's wife, and I am sure her husband would not have come like this imbecile Dupont to complain of his wife."

"No, my love, he would not have done that."

"Ah, if I could have foreseen, divined; but could I imagine that this young man would inherit a considerable fortune?"

"No, my heart; you could not divine it."

"Ah, be quiet, Monsieur Moutonnet, be quiet; you make me boil with your coldness. But it is no use thinking of it now."

"No, my wife; don't think about it."

"Ah, that is easy for you to say. We shall retire from business with an income of six thou-

sand livres; but we might have been able to live at our son-in-law's country house."

"I should have played dominoes there every evening."

"I shall die of mortification, Monsieur Moutonnet."

"You are right, my dear."

While the married couple expressed their regret, Bidois looked forward with delight to the day which should install him in his position as steward. At length this fortunate moment arrived. He had his trunk carried to the house of his new master, and said farewell to his old employers. M. Moutonnet wept when he embraced Bidois, and Madame Moutonnet pressed his hand with much feeling.

"Say to M. Adolphe Dalmont that I very much regret," the lady began. "But, no, Bidois; say nothing; I believe that will be best."

"Yes, madame," said the old clerk, who, with his bonus, had arrayed himself in new garments from top to toe, and who had never looked so well; "I will not speak of you to monseigneur; I believe that will please him best."

Adolphe awaited the arrival of his steward before visiting his estate. His income opened to him all the pleasures of Paris, but he spent most of his time with Charles and Louise. His young friends dared not call him their benefactor, because that would have annoyed him; but they

had for him that sincere attachment which one often seeks vainly in those who have been the recipients of one's favors.

As soon as Bidois appeared, Adolphe called the carriage for their departure. The new steward, full of respect for his new master, sat very stiffly before him; and Adolphe had much difficulty in putting him at his ease, and making him lean back upon the cushions, and stretch his legs, which he hardly dared to budge. Bidois did not say a word; but Adolphe talked constantly of Eugénie, and, as he talked continually, Bidois was freed from the necessity of responding, and contented himself with smiling, and bowing his head in approval. But Adolphe was anxious to know what had happened on the wedding-day, and Bidois was compelled to answer his questions. He depicted the distress of the young bride, her pale, grief-stricken countenance; and Adolphe often interrupted his narrative, exclaiming, —

"Poor little thing! Poor Eugénie! And I blamed her!"

"She did not dance at all on the wedding-day," added Bidois, "though the ball was magnificent."

"She did not?"

"No, monsieur; not at all." Adolphe lifted his handkerchief to his eyes; and Bidois, fearing he had said something stupid, hastened to add, —

"Ah, pardon me; she went upon the floor for the last dance."

But the conversation was finished, and Adolphe, lost in his memories, spoke no more during the journey. Bidois, disturbed at this silence, said to himself, "Perhaps I ought not to have told him that she danced the Boulangère."

The travellers reached their destination at last. Adolphe was delighted with his château, and had visited every part of it while Bidois was still investigating the storehouse and the poultry-yard. The peasants came to greet the new proprietor; and Bidois, who wished, with all his heart, they were vassals, promised them his good word with his master. But the frankness, the geniality and kindness of the new proprietor soon won him all hearts. While he joked with his farmer's wife, and caressed her children, Bidois went over the house and made an exact account of the product. The next day Adolphe examined his woods, his fields, his vineyards; and the new steward accompanied him, notebook in hand, taking his memoranda in pencil. In the evening he went to the village, entered everywhere, inquired as to everything, went to make his report to his master, and already suggested to him some economies and improvements.

"My friend," said Adolphe to his steward, "do not send anyone away; I do not wish to cause unhappiness. Understand my intentions. I shall return to Paris; you will remain here."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Once more, no monseigneur."

"Yes, monsieur."

"If the country people wish to come into my park and gardens—"

"I shall not let them enter," interrupted Bidois.

"On the contrary, you will always make them welcome. If my farmers do not pay very promptly—"

"I must sue them."

"No; give them all the time they need. If you discover the poachers are hunting on my land—"

"I shall have them arrested."

"No; inquire into their needs, and, if they are poor, give them work, so that they will be relieved of the necessity of doing evil. Also, if a cottage or harvest should be destroyed by fire—"

"I shall carry water."

"That will do very well, but you must also carry money to repair the loss. If you find that honest lovers cannot marry for lack of a dowry—"

"I must forbid them to see each other."

"On the contrary, you must let them marry, and I will be responsible for the dowry. I hope you understand me, Bidois. Try to make these good villagers happy, so that they shall have enough for the week, and can dance with happy hearts on Sunday. I will pay for the orchestra. I think that will be sufficient, monsieur."

"Must I join them in dancing?"

"Oh, as to that, you are entirely the master."

After giving his final instructions to his manager, Adolphe returned to Paris to see his young friends; and Bidois, who felt as if he had grown two inches since he had become steward of a pretty château, commenced to classify the properties he was to govern, and began his functions by ordering a dog to be drowned which had had the impertinence to snap at the calves of monsieur the steward, as he crossed the court.

CHAPTER XII

A Meeting and Its Consequences

As soon as Adolphe entered into possession of his wealth he sought, in the various pleasures and occupations of a man of the world, distraction from his first love; sometimes he persuaded himself that that love was entirely cured, and the next day he would be more relentlessly pursued than ever by the image of Eugénie. He had frequent distractions, however; he met in society many pretty and attractive women, and often believed himself in love. He paid court to them, he lavished attentions upon them, which were favorably received because he was young, rich and generous; then, delighted with his conquest, he hastened to his young friends and said to them, —

"I have at last forgotten all about Eugénie, and care for her no longer. I love another, and she loves me."

"So much the better," said Charles. "I was quite sure it would be so in the end."

"That is very fortunate," said Louise; "at least we can now kiss each other before you without causing you to sigh."

But a few days later Adolphe returned sadly to the young couple.

"Well, what about your love affair?" said Louise.

"Oh, I deceived myself as to that; it is already ended. I thought myself in love, but it was merely a caprice."

"Never mind; try to make it the real thing next time."

At length came a period when Adolphe appeared to have met his fate; a pretty, well-built young woman had responded readily to his tender avowals, and during the space of a month Adolphe was assiduous in his attentions to her, believing himself really in love; while the young lady herself had no doubt as to the power of her attractions nor as to Adolphe's love. There are some attachments which subsist only in the midst of pleasures, and which die in solitude. This love is the most common; and, for fear that the feeling he experienced should not survive frequent tête-à-têtes, Adolphe each day invented some new pleasure, in order that his love might last longer; and Charles said to his wife, —

"I believe our dear Adolphe has become reasonable at last, and that he has forgotten his Eugénie."

Louise shook her head incredulously. She read, better than her husband, Adolphe's heart.

While these events were transpiring, Eugénie's

health had become fully reëstablished. Dupont was still absent, and the young wife lived quietly with Jeanneton; her melancholy continued, despite the efforts of her faithful servant, who sought by every means to distract her, and who often repeated to her how she had found Adolphe with Zélie on the morning after his last interview with Eugénie. But Eugénie only smiled as she listened to Jeanneton, who cursed herself for saying that which her mistress would not believe.

"Ah, Jeanneton," said Eugénie, "if you had seen him when he came here with my husband, you would no longer accuse him. Poor Adolphe! I had not the strength to fix my eyes long on his, but a single glance sufficed to show me how much he had changed — how disappointment and sorrow had altered his features."

"My God, madame, I will not say he had not suffered, but merely that he had consoled himself; they all do the same. Men cannot always be constant; desire is stronger than they."

"Ah, Jeanneton, Adolphe is not like other men."

"And I say to you, he is no better than the rest."

Eugénie was ignorant of Adolphe's change of fortune; Madame Moutonnet had sedulously hidden that fact from her daughter, believing that it would further augment her regrets; she thought Eugénie would grieve because she had missed

position and wealth, but she little knew her daughter's heart. Jeanneton invited her mistress to go out walking, to visit the theatre and to take various pleasures, in the hope of dissipating her melancholy; but Eugénie refused; for her there was no pleasure save in memories. At last the prayers of the maid prevailed, and, to give Jeanneton pleasure, Eugénie yielded to her request and consented to visit the theatre. The good girl jumped with joy, saying to herself, —

"It's a good beginning; and, if the play amuses madame, we shall not stop there."

Eugénie decided to go to the Grand Opera, which would be a marvellous sight for the servant, and she promised herself pleasure in watching Jeanneton's delight.

The young woman and her maid occupied an open box. Jeanneton, all eyes, all ears, could not turn her attention from the stage, and Eugénie smiled as she watched her. When she had amused herself for some moments with the maid's astonishment, Eugénie looked about the hall, and her glance was arrested by a box in which was a young gentleman in the company of a very elegantly dressed lady. The gentleman was Adolphe, and the woman near whom he was seated was his latest conquest, with whom he was trying to believe himself in love. Eugénie could hardly persuade herself that she saw Adolphe, — Adolphe dressed in the height of fashion, — Adolphe smiling upon

another woman. This was not Adolphe as she had last seen him, — pale, emaciated, distracted, coming into her room with M. Dupont. Poor Eugénie! She always remembered him thus. Not knowing what to think, what to believe, doubting the evidence of her own eyes, Eugénie, trembling, and scarcely breathing, pressed Jeanneton's arm.

"Look! look!" she said to her.

"Yes, madame, yes; it is fine."

"Do you recognize him, Jeanneton?"

"Yes, madame; it is he who just now wanted to kill the princess."

"In that box over there."

"Now they are beginning to dance."

"How he looks at her! How he speaks to her!"

"They are turning like teetotums."

"You do not understand me, Jeanneton."

"Now they are going still faster."

It was not until the act was finished that Jeanneton could listen to Eugénie. She turned then, and perceived her mistress' agitation.

"Ah, madame, what is the matter? Are you not well?"

"No, I am trembling, but it is nothing; I shall be brave. Ah, it is really he!"

"He? Who?"

"Adolphe."

"Where, then?"

"Wait; do you not see, in that box, that woman? She is quite pretty, Jeanneton."

"Well, yes, it is he. How he is dressed! Has he made a fortune?"

"Perhaps he is married; perhaps it is his wife who is with him."

"His wife! Goodness! It is possible."

"He seems to be in love with her."

"Oh, I can't see as to that from here. But it really seems like fate that the first time we come to the theatre we should see that. There, let us go now, madame; this sight has made you ill."

"No, Jeanneton, I can remain; I shall have courage; besides, you enjoy it."

"Oh, madame, do you think I could enjoy anything when I see you troubled?"

"Ah, Jeanneton, I acknowledge you were right. I was foolish to believe in him. This will cure me, my poor Jeanneton."

"Let us go, madame."

"No, I tell you; we will remain."

During the remainder of the play Eugénie did not take her eyes from the box which held Adolphe and his mistress. Jeanneton turned a mournful eye between heaven and hell; Eugénie's state distressed her. Sometimes her mistress drew her attention to the stage, but soon after she would make her look at Adolphe.

"See, Jeanneton, how attentive he is! how gallant!"

"Oh, that is not his wife, madame."

"She is pretty, this woman."

"Yes; but, mercy! you can't tell what she would be in daylight."

"He is taking her hand."

"Yes, madame."

"He is pressing it, no doubt."

"That is possible."

"She is talking to him, and laughing; but, Jeanneton, you are not looking at the stage."

"Never mind, never mind, madame."

"Really, the woman is not so pretty as I thought at first. She must be at least twenty-eight years old."

"Yes, at least that."

"Twenty-eight is old — is it not, Jeanneton?"

"I believe so; I am the same age."

"He does not see me; he is too much occupied."

"Do you want him to see you?"

"O my God! no. What would be the use?"

However, when the curtain fell, she managed to leave her box at the same time as Adolphe left his, and they encountered each other in the corridor.

A loved voice suddenly struck Adolphe's ear. He turned quickly; it was she; he saw Eugénie. Without stopping to remember that he had a lady with him, without thinking what he did, he dropped his mistress' arm and followed in the footsteps of his beloved; but the crowd separated them, and Eugénie, who had only wished to see

her lover for a moment, and assure herself that she was not deceived in her recognition of him, immediately hurried Jeanneton on. She passed out of Adolphe's sight; and while he pushed aside the people who surrounded him and ran down the corridor, calling her, she was already in the carriage with Jeanneton. Eugénie maintained a strict silence during the remainder of the evening; she appeared lost in deep reflection, and Jeanneton dared not interrupt her reverie. The next morning the maid came early to her young mistress, to inquire how she had passed the night, and was agreeably surprised to find her more serene and gayer than usual; but her surprise redoubled when Eugénie asked her for news of M. Dupont.

"Do you think he will return soon?" asked Eugénie.

"Return? Who, madame?"

"My husband."

"Your husband!"

Jeanneton opened her eyes wide; it was the first time that Eugénie had ever spoken of M. Dupont in this way.

"Where is he now?"

"He is at Marseilles, I think. But, gracious! I am not sure."

"Go, Jeanneton, and ask Joseph the exact address of my husband."

Jeanneton, not knowing what to think, went

down to execute her mistress' order; and while she was gone Eugénie seated herself at her desk and wrote Dupont the following note: —

I have wronged you, monsieur, and should I blush to confess it? I believe that you are kind enough to forgive me. From this time on you shall find in me a submissive wife, and I shall endeavor to fulfil all the duties which that title imposes on me.

Eugénie sealed this missive and addressed it according to the directions which Jeanneton had brought her.

"Go and post this letter for me, dear Jeanneton," she said.

"This letter for M. Dupont?"

"Yes, for my husband."

"Her husband, — always her husband," said Jeanneton, as she carried the letter. "Well, well; something extraordinary has certainly come to pass."

CHAPTER XIII

The Husband en Route

Dupont was still at Marseilles, immersed in olives, anchovies, sardines and figs. He had on hand an immense amount of business, and was not at all loath to linger for some time before returning to Paris, feeling sure that he should find his wife still ill. Dupont was not very satisfied with the result of his marriage; the words of the justice were rushing incessantly through his head, and he said to himself, "Really, when a young woman behaves in such an unheard-of fashion towards her lawful husband there must necessarily be some urgent private reason for it, the nature of which I cannot imagine; I only know that it is extremely unpleasant to have married a woman who has an affliction which she does not wish to disclose to me."

This idea haunted Dupont and prevented him from enjoying the pleasures which were offered to him. In all the meetings to which a wealthy merchant is invited, he acted so strangely that he became the butt of everyone.

"One can plainly see that he is a newly married man," they kept repeating everywhere; "he

is thinking all the time of his wife, and is grieved at not seeing her."

"Yes, indeed," said Dupont to himself; "I do certainly think of her, and there is good reason why, — I who wished to have children to perpetuate my race. It is very hard. I forgot to mention that to the commissary; but when I return to Paris I shall call a consultation of doctors."

Dupont had just finished his business, and was on the eve of returning to Paris, when a letter from the capital was handed to him.

He opened it, looked at the signature, and read, "Eugénie, the wife of Dupont."

"A letter from my wife!" exclaimed the grocer. "Mon Dieu! what now? She is surely dying."

He read on, at each word with increasing astonishment, — "'Henceforth, you shall find in me a submissive wife.' Can it be possible? Was it really my wife who wrote me that? 'And I am able to fulfil all the duties which that title imposes upon me.' 'All the duties'; that's clear; I know what she means. That's the effect of absence. My wife adores me when I am out of her sight. Poor little wife! She writes to inform me that she is ready to fulfil her duties. It is charming — and that commissary wished me to believe — Tut! my wife has no trouble; here's the proof. She awaits me with impatience, for she has written me. At length I am going to be a husband in every sense of the word."

Dupont was intoxicated. He leaped up and down his room, ran through his apartment like a madman, then descended in haste to his hostess. He ordered his valise to be packed, and ran to the express office, where he arrived quite blown.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed he; "I must have horses, a carriage, postilions."

"Where are you going, monsieur?"

"To Paris."

"When do you wish to start?"

"Immediately; my wife is waiting for me. Which is the fastest way of travelling?"

"Faith, monsieur, it's to post."

"To post, of course; well, I'll post."

"Will monsieur take a chaise?"

"I'll take two if necessary."

"How many horses?"

"As many as you can harness."

"We harness two, three, and sometimes four."

"I wish five. You can arrange them in a file, one after the other."

"We can't do that, monsieur; you wouldn't be able to manage them."

"Very well; place four in front."

"Impossible, monsieur; we couldn't fasten them to the chaise."

"Then place them where you wish, so that I fly like the wind. It's all the same to me whether they're before or behind."

"Then you'll need two postilions."

"Three postilions and an avant-courier. My wife is waiting for me, and I'm in a hurry."

From the express office Dupont ran to his hotel. He stirred up everybody; he did not take time to pack his trunks; and took with him only his notebook and some indispensable articles, which he stuffed into his portmanteau.

"You will send all the rest to me in Paris," said he to the landlord.

"It seems, monsieur, that you have received important news, which necessitates your return."

"Yes, indeed; a letter from my wife."

"Ah, mon Dieu! is she sick, monsieur?"

"On the contrary, she is very well for the first time since our marriage. You must see that I am consequently very happy."

This was a perfect riddle to the landlord, but Dupont had no time to explain; the chaise was at the door, the horses neighed, the postilions cracked their whips, Dupont leaped into the carriage, and was off directly.

The courier, the postilions, the horses, the extraordinary retinue, all gave rise to the belief that the post-chaise had inside some important personage. Wherever it passed they said, "It's a prince who's travelling incognito, or it's some ambassador or general; it must certainly be somebody of distinction." And they asked the postilions, who answered, "It's a wholesale grocer, going to rejoin his wife." The inquisitive were amazed;

the postilions laughed; and the carriage resumed its route, leaving all those who had surrounded it to make their conjectures, and to ask one another if they had heard aright.

Dupont paid liberally, and they treated him like a contractor, like a collecter of revenues, like a lord, like a stockjobber who has become bankrupt at home and is going to buy lands abroad.

The courier who preceded Dupont was charged to give orders to the innkeepers that nothing should retard the advance of the traveller. The arrival of a courier always announces some person of importance; it is a lucky thing for the landlords; they turn everything in their houses topsy-turvy, to be able to gratify all my lord's desires. The spit turns, the fire sparkles, all the pots and pans are on the stoves, the scullions are at their posts, the servants hasten to get ready the best rooms and to set the table for the illustrious traveller; for the man who has a courier does not dine at the table d'hôte, and, as he will not remain for the night, they hope that at least the meal of which he partakes will indemnify them for all their trouble. Soon the noise of the horses, the whips of the postilions, announce the arrival of the great man. All the people of the hostelry run to the door. The master awaits him, hat in hand; the servants have adjusted their headgear, the grooms have left the horses, guests of the inn run to the windows to see the man who put the

whole house into confusion, and all the passers-by and idlers of the town gather before the door.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the innkeeper, on perceiving the carriage. "Five horses, three postilions! Suzanne, Marie, have you scrubbed the room?—dusted everywhere? Jacques, Pierre, see to the roast, the fricassees, the fricandeaux—spare nothing; a personage like this has a delicate palate, and is regardless of expense." At length the carriage entered the court; all eyes were directed upon him whom it enclosed; they ran to help him to alight. But, instead of a personage bedizened with ribbons, in a laced and embroidered coat, in a plumed hat, and of haughty and imposing mien, they were not a little surprised to see a fat little man, with vulgar features, wearing a cap, clothed in a sky-blue coat and yellow breeches, and sporting colored gaiters and cravat, and who, in darting awkwardly out of the carriage, upset the landlord, who was in the act of offering him his hand, on a heap of filth. "Never mind," said the landlord, getting up; "he has five horses, three postilions and a courier; and, since he is a very rich man, the trouble and expense are of no consequence."

He followed, hat in hand, the traveller, who entered the common room quite out of breath, and threw himself into a chair before a table covered with oilcloth, at which carters usually dined, promising his postilions to eat very fast.

"If my lord, his highness, would please come to the apartment I have prepared for him," said the landlord, bowing low to Dupont.

"It's not worth the trouble, my good sir. I'm very comfortable where I am."

"Well, he's original," said the landlord to himself. "I guessed as much. But no matter; he has the retinue of a prince," and he respectfully approached his guest. "Monsieur wishes dinner, of course?"

"Yes; I am hungry. That carriage shook me; that has given me an appetite. I'll gladly eat a morsel."

"Monsieur's dinner is ready."

"Ah, parbleu! there is no need of such ceremony; only let me have a dish of potatoes and a piece of Gruyère cheese, with a bottle of table wine."

"I don't quite understand, monsieur."

"I ask for potatoes and cheese, and see that the latter is old; for I'm a connoisseur in cheese, and if yours isn't good, I can supply you with a famous brand."

"Oh, what a stupid idiot!" said the host, on betaking himself to the kitchen. "Jacques, Pierre, remove the soup, the roast, the fricassees. The bumpkin who has just come with five horses wants nothing but cheese and potatoes! Who the deuce would have thought so? Travel like a lord and dine like a snob! I'd bet anything that

that fellow is nothing great; nature will always peep out."

Without attending to the bad humor of his host, Dupont partook of his modest dinner, stuffing himself with potatoes and cheese; then, after having had a little wicker-covered bottle filled with brandy, he got again inside of his post-chaise, throwing two sous as a gratuity to the servants. It was, nevertheless, the same man who paid the postilions so generously to get to his wife, who was regardless of expense and acted like a lord; but in everything else he was again Dupont the grocer. The landlord was right; nature will always peep out.

The postilions, being well paid, dined much better than the man they conveyed. They wished to please this odd character, covering their horses with foam; but still Dupont thought they were not going fast enough. But half-way between Marseilles and Paris, the post-chaise, which had never before been drawn by five horses, broke in pieces in the middle of the road. Nobody was hurt, but Dupont was inconsolable; the accident would greatly delay his arrival. So badly had the carriage been damaged that the postilions declared that three days at least would be required to put it in order.

"Three days! three days!" exclaimed Dupont; "in three days my wife — But, oh, what a bright idea! What need have I to go in a car-

riage? One goes quicker on horseback, for my courier was always before me. Done! I'll go on horseback, at full gallop, like a courier."

Dupont was never on horseback in his life, but he was confident that he could ride like a dragoon. He paid his postilions, who tried in vain to make him give up his project. Dupont was obstinate; besides, he would not wait for another carriage. He, therefore, bought the horse, boots and whip of his courier, and, dressed half as a citizen and half as a postilion, he mounted his beast and took the road for Paris.

Dupont had not gone more than a quarter of a league when he became aware that the exercise of riding was not so easy as he had supposed. Every moment ready to fall from the saddle, he made bounds which sent him from the croup to the mane of his courser. The more he tried to stick to the saddle, the more was he shaken and less able to regain his equilibrium; and his feet were every instant getting out of the stirrups, which were much too long for him. Nevertheless, he did not lose courage. He held on by the tail, by the saddle, by the mane of the animal; but what annoyed him most was that he could make no use of his whip. To make his courser go forward he strained every nerve, trying to kick it with his heels; but the grocer's short legs could not reach the animal's sides.

When he had gone a league he lost one of his

jackboots; at the end of the second league he lost the other.

"It's all the same," said he; "I'll ride quite as well in my shoes, even better, for I was hampered in these great boots, and I must endeavor to keep my balance."

In this way did Dupont travel half the day, when he perceived that he had torn his breeches, but went on, nevertheless.

"I've sacrificed my breeches," said he; "but in such circumstances we must not regard that."

He soon began to feel acute pain. "The deuce!" he exclaimed; "that cursed gallop skins one when he is not accustomed to it. I'll put on a poultice at the first inn."

Not without difficulty, however, did Dupont reach that inn. His horse, which had been neither whipped nor spurred, would only move along slowly; and Dupont, while trying to make him resume a trot, said to himself, "It seems I'm getting accustomed to the horse, for he doesn't shake me quite so much as he did."

The arrival of the postilion, in a sky-blue coat, and shoes with buckles, produced in the inn a very different effect from that caused by the post-chaise and five horses.

At the strange sight the servant girls burst out laughing; the landlord did not put himself about; the waiters did not help him to dismount, and cracked jokes as to his odd appearance. At length

our traveller hobbled into the hostelry and asked for a private room, for he very well knew that he could not apply a poultice to himself in the presence of all the other guests.

"Above everything, attend to my horse; the rascal wouldn't gallop; I must make him take something that will put fire into him. Make him some toast, seasoned with wine, pepper, salt and sugar. Oh, I'll make him gallop. Give him also some truffles; I shan't any more need whip or spurs."

"Truffles to a horse!" exclaimed the attendants; "the man is probably a foreigner, and perhaps in his country truffles are very common. But in this place his horse's dinner will cost him dear."

Dupont followed a young maid who showed him to his private room and asked him what he would have. "A linseed poultice," answered Dupont; and the girl, ready to split with laughter, went and said to her master, "That man's very funny; he feeds his horse on truffles, and dines himself on linseed."

Dupont ordered dinner, and while he was partaking of his repast the servant told everywhere that they had in their house a traveller who was hurrying post-haste to rejoin his wife. All the women of the place were curious to see such an extraordinary man, to whom they wished to point as an example to their husbands, and a crowd had collected to see Dupont when he came out.

Our traveller had rested; he felt better; the poultice had allayed his sufferings, and he got ready to resume his route. His horse pawed the pavement, and seemed to share the ardor of its rider. "Good! good!" said Dupont; "the toast has had its effect, and I shall have no trouble now in putting him to the gallop."

He settled with the innkeeper; his courser's feed cost him somewhat dear, but he hoped to reach Paris next day, and did not murmur. He mounted his horse before the crowd which had assembled to see him, and soon disappeared from their sight. The horse seemed animated with new ardor; the heating repast which had been given him dispensed effectually with the need of whip or spur, and Dupont was enchanted; he held on with all his might, and exclaimed, "Now I hope I shall soon be there!"

But soon the motion of the animal caused the poultice to drop from its place and the pain then became so acute that Dupont cried, and swore like one possessed, at each bound that he took. He wished to stop his horse; he pulled the bridle to the right, to the left; but the more he stirred, the faster the animal ran away with him. Startled by the cries of his rider, he no longer obeyed the rein, and he got rid of the bit, which was white with foam; he no longer galloped, he flew, he darted onward with frightful rapidity; everyone with all speed cleared the way. In vain did Du-

pont shout, "Stop! stop!" The peasants ran away in alarm. The wretched horseman dropped the reins and lay down flat on his horse's back; he laid hold of the animal's neck, mane,—of everything he could grasp; he abandoned himself to his fate, and his fate led his horse to a newly opened quarry, into which he rushed headlong. When the horrified spectators ran to succor the horse and his rider, they found both dead.

CHAPTER XIV

The Steward. The Wood at Romainville Conclusion

It can hardly be said that Eugénie awaited her husband with impatience, but at least her expectation was void of fear; at last she was resigned to the fate that had made her his wife. She had strictly forbidden Jeanneton to speak to her at all of Adolphe, or of the unlucky visit to the opera, and the latter said to herself, "Thanks be to Heaven! my dear Eugénie is at last cured of her love, now she will be happy!"

However, the time passed and Dupont did not return, nor did anyone receive a letter from him. His assistants became anxious, and Eugénie was astonished; for after what she had written to him she expected to see her husband immediately.

At length one morning Jeanneton brought in a letter, and Eugénie said, "No doubt it brings news of my husband." But the envelope was bordered with black, and the young woman trembled involuntarily. She opened it at last, and found it was from the mayor of the town near which Dupont had perished, and to which his corpse had

been carried. The papers found upon the dead man had easily led to his identification, and after the burial the mayor had written to the widow to inform her of her husband's death, with all the known details of the accident. Eugénie, too deeply shocked to have strength to repeat the sad news, handed the letter to Jeanneton.

"Take it; read it," she said to her.

"Good Heavens! the poor man!" exclaimed the maid; and she wept, for she had a tender heart. She pitied the sad end of Dupont. Eugénie wept also, and felt that she had not acted rightly by her husband. The news spread rapidly; everybody commiserated Dupont, everybody regretted him, because he was stupid without being wicked, which is much better than being wicked without being stupid.

"But then," said Jeanneton, "why did he take it into his head to return on horseback? After all, one cannot evade one's fate. You are a widow, madame; but, my faith! it is the same as if you were still a young girl, and there are not many young girls who are widows like you."

Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet came to condole with their daughter, and Papa Moutonnet shed tears over poor Dupont; but Jeanneton was surprised to observe that madame was not much affected by the loss of her son-in-law. The elderly couple had left their shop and were living in the Marais; and, as Eugénie had decided to

dispose of the grocery stock, Jeanneton supposed that Madame Moutonnet would invite her daughter to live with her. But the mamma did nothing of the sort; she approved her daughter's plans, and left her free to follow her own wishes, to the great astonishment of Jeanneton.

Eugénie easily disposed of her husband's shop and took a modest and retired apartment for herself and her maid. As time passed on after Dupont's death, Jeanneton felt a longing to speak of Adolphe; but Eugénie maintained a profound silence upon that subject, and poor Jeanneton dared not broach it, though she was anxious to know if Eugénie loved him still.

After his adventure at the Opera, Adolphe had broken with his mistress, for the young lady had been greatly piqued at his conduct; in dropping her arm and running after another he had committed one of those crimes that no woman can forgive. Adolphe did not even seek to excuse himself; the sight of Eugénie had awakened all his old admiration, and he felt then that he did not love — had never loved — his new conquest, and he did not care to feign an attachment which had already ceased to offer him any charm. He went to tell his friends what had happened at the Opera.

"It is very unfortunate," remarked Charles. "What! you no longer love this woman whom you adored yesterday?"

"No, my friend."

"I did not imagine that would last very long," remarked Louise.

"You must fall in love with someone else as soon as possible."

"No, Charles, no; that is all finished. I shall not love anyone else—except you, my friends."

"And then, Eugénie," said Louise softly to her husband.

Adolphe wished to seek in foreign countries the distraction which he could not find in Paris, and decided to travel through England, Italy and the Alps. He sent to Bidois his orders for the period of his absence, which might be long; and, after he had kissed Charles and Louise, he left Paris upon the very day when Eugénie became a widow.

The summer drew to its close, and the season was not favorable for travelling; but when one is rich one surmounts all difficulties. Adolphe did not have five horses and three postilions to his chaise, but he had everything necessary for crossing the continent conveniently. He admired the Alps, he traversed Italy, and he spent the winter in England; but, though the pleasures of travelling left him useful and agreeable memories, he felt that something recalled him to France, and he returned to Paris after nine months' absence.

His first care was to go to see his young friends. Charles and Louise were still happy, for

they loved each other tenderly, and their business had prospered. He saw with joy that he should soon be a godfather, and Louise reflected sorrowfully that only one godmother would satisfy her entirely. They knew nothing of Dupont's death.

Adolphe was curious to see how Bidois had directed his affairs during his absence, so he decided to visit his country place. When he entered the court of his château he noticed that his valets wore a livery, that his hunting-dogs were muzzled, that his rooms were all numbered, that there was a counter in his dining-room and a desk with a great ledger in his drawing-room. His porter had an arithmetic in his hand, his housekeeper was doing a sum in addition, his gardener was learning to make ciphers, his cook was studying the multiplication table, his groom was counting on his fingers; even the porter's little boy, who was only five years old, ran up to him, exclaiming, "Monseigneur, twice two are four, and twice four are eight."

"That is very good, my little fellow," said Adolphe, kissing the child; "I perceive that Bidois has made arithmetic flourish on my estate. But where is he?"

"Monsieur, the steward is in the village; but if monseigneur wishes, somebody will go in search of him."

"No, I will look over the village also; I will find him myself."

He had walked through the village without meeting the steward, when, in passing through a lane which led to the fields, he heard Bidois' voice in warm discussion with the gamekeeper, to whom he was insisting that the deer and the hares must be put in folds, that he might ascertain correctly, and enter in his ledger, the exact amount of game belonging to monseigneur.

The arrival of Adolphe put an end to this discussion. The steward advanced with a respectful air towards his master, who hardly recognized him; for Bidois had changed his round hat for a three-cornered one, his coat for a shooting-jacket, and his cane for an old gun, on which he leaned when he walked, instead of bearing it on his shoulder; the pen which he usually wore behind his ear was replaced by the pencil with which monsieur the steward took his notes.

"Well, Bidois, have you turned hunter?" asked Adolphe, smiling at the old steward's figure.

"Monseigneur, I do everything, — absolutely everything. I wish to inform myself about the game; and, while I know nothing about hunting, I always carry a gun out of respect for it."

"Has everything gone well in my absence?"

"Yes, monseigneur; your farmers pay very promptly, and my ledger is always posted."

"I am sure of that; but are these good people contented, happy?"

"Oh, they are undoubtedly happy; and when

they have learned to calculate they will be still gayer."

"They dance often, I hope."

"Every Sunday and on the great holidays, which makes fifty-six times a year, without counting extra occasions. But if you will return to the house, monseigneur, I will show you my daybook, my ledger and my safe."

Adolphe returned home with his steward, with whom he longed to chat, not about his revenues, but about a person of whom he had heard no news for a long time and of whom he was eager to talk. But Bidois could think of nothing but his ledger and his accounts, and he besought Adolphe to cast his eye over them.

"See, monseigneur; everything is in order; all your people have an open account; there is a special account for your horses; you have not an inch of ground that has not been valued; and I am now employed on an estimate of your trees. I have made a double entry for the poultry, and a running one for the rabbits; as to the special allowances we make for fires, inundations or storms, I count that under the expenses of business."

"That is excellent, Bidois; that is very good; but I wish to know—"

"All the horned beasts are registered; there is the entrance and the issue. I have used a special column for the vegetables—"

"That is very well, but—"

"As to the fish, I believe it would be a little difficult to get an exact account of them, unless I should dry the pond, and that is an idea I wanted to submit to you, monseigneur."

"Leave the fish in peace and answer me."

"You will see how everything goes along. There is only this stupid porter, who cannot understand decimals; but I am watching that. I am waging a deadly war against the small coins that these peasants still have in their heads. I only ask a few years, monseigneur, and throughout your domains they will count only in francs and centimes."

"I hope you have finished now, Bidois, and that you will listen to me. I ask you news from Paris, — of people who interest me."

"Ah, Dieu! I forgot. In fact, monseigneur, I received a letter from Madame Moutonnet."

"A letter from Madame Moutonnet?"

"Yes, monseigneur; it was six or seven months ago. She sent you her compliments, monseigneur."

"To me?"

"Certainly, monseigneur; and she told me some news — ah, what news! How it will astonish you!"

"It concerned her daughter?"

"Yes, certainly, I believe it, that poor little woman!"

"You make me tremble, Bidois. What has happened to her?"

"She is a widow."

"Eugénie is a widow! Is it possible?"

"Yes, monseigneur, because her husband is dead."

"Dupont is dead? How was it? When? Where?"

"On the road to Paris; returning from Marseilles, — a horse in a quarry, — the animal took the bit in his teeth, — and that Dupont went on horseback, though they say he did not know how to ride a donkey. If the man had known how to calculate dangers. In fact it was nine months ago, or more."

"You say she has been a widow nine months. Unlucky fellow! and you did not write to me."

"Monseigneur, I have only known it for seven. You have been travelling, and I did not know your address and your number."

"And where is she now?"

"In Paris, no doubt, monseigneur."

"She is not living with her mother?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Horses, Bidois!"

"Monseigneur is going?"

"Immediately."

"Monseigneur has not taken anything yet, and —"

"Horses, I tell you!"

"What carriage?"

"The first that comes."

Bidois placed himself at the window of the court, and shouted to the groom, —

"Harness numbers one and two to monseigneur's coach. You will give some oats to numbers three and four."

Adolphe went down himself to hurry his people, who were always confused by the orders of Bidois. In a short time the horses were harnessed, and the coachman, who saw the impatience of his master, went off to Paris at a rapid gallop. Adolphe hastened to Louise and her husband. He entered their shop, laughing and skipping, and the young people, who had grown somewhat accustomed to his foolish actions, waited impatiently nevertheless till he explained the reason.

"My friends, she is a widow!" he exclaimed. "At last she is a widow! Eugénie is free!"

"Is it possible? Are you sure?"

"Yes; she has been a widow for nine months. And I left France; I went away just when I might have seen her, expressed to her — "

"No, monsieur; I am sure you could not have seen her immediately. Madame Eugénie would not have permitted it so soon. Think, monsieur, of the mourning, of the proprieties."

"Yes, yes; you are right; it is better as it is. As for this poor Dupont, he was a good man. But don't let us talk about it, dear friends; after nine months I can certainly see his widow."

"Oh, yes, monsieur. Charles, there is our god-

mother already found. Is it not so, Monsieur Adolphe?"

"But, Louise, if she no longer loves me?"

"There, that's another thing now."

"She saw me at the Opera with that woman, whom I detest."

"Ah, mon Dieu! And were you not a bachelor, and a young man?"

"But she might believe I no longer loved her."

"You will prove the contrary to her."

"But I must see her at once, and I do not know her address."

"Oh, as to that, I will soon tell you."

Louise put on her hat and ran to Rue aux Ours, to the people who had replaced Dupont, and returned, bringing the address to Adolphe, who started immediately for Eugénie's home.

"Madame Dupont is not in Paris," said the porter to him. "Since the beginning of the fine season she has gone to live in the country."

"In the country; but where? in what direction?"

"My faith! I believe it is toward Belleville—Saint Gervais—Romainville—Romainville. Ah, yes; that is where it is."

Adolphe took a cab and started immediately for Romainville. His heart beat quickly, for he said to himself, "She loves me still, since she has gone to live there."

Eugénie had passed in retirement the first

months that followed the death of her husband. She saw nobody but her parents, and Madame Moutonnet approved of her daughter's settled life; however, after some months, she said to her, with a sort of affectation, —

"You are a widow, — free, — young; but I do not intend to oppose your inclinations."

Madame Moutonnet was eager to speak of Adolphe, but she felt that this would compromise her dignity; still, she took care to inform Jeanneton of the young man's change of fortune.

Jeanneton could not long keep silence with Eugénie. She spoke to her of Adolphe, and Eugénie replied with a sigh, —

"He no longer loves me, Jeanneton."

"Bah, madame! you must not believe that, because you saw him with a lady. Listen to me; you were married, and a young man — "

"I have nothing with which to reproach him, but I am sure he no longer loves me."

But Jeanneton learned of Adolphe's new fortune; and as the time went on and he did not try to see Eugénie, she began to fear, also, that his heart had changed. She ventured but rarely to speak of him to her mistress, who always silenced her, and replied, —

"He no longer loves me."

As spring returned Eugénie often walked towards the wood at Romainville. Accompanied by Jeanneton, she went to see again the places which

recalled her love for Adolphe. It was especially under the clump of trees where he had confessed his love to her that she liked to sit. She was happy only in that spot, and wished to return to it every day.

"Goodness, madame!" said Jeanneton to her, "if this country pleases you so much, let us rent a lodging, and spend the summer here."

Eugénie approved this plan, and the next day she rented an apartment at Romainville, and went to settle there with Jeanneton. Every morning she rose at dawn, and, not fearing at that hour to meet with any dangerous characters, she went to walk alone in the wood, seeking all the paths she had traversed with Adolphe, and resting in her favorite retreat. During the day she returned there with Jeanneton; she took her book or her work, and under this shade she never felt weary. But when her maid spoke to her of Adolphe, she said to her, —

"Be silent; do not recall me to the present. Leave me to my memories; here I dream of him; I believe that he loves me still; but when you waken me, I remember that he no longer loves me."

But one day, in directing her steps towards her favorite retreat, Eugénie, who was a little in advance of Jeanneton, heard the foliage rustle which surrounded her clump of trees. She drew near and perceived a young man sitting in the place she habitually occupied. She recognized him, and

she paused, trembling, not daring to breathe, with her eyes fixed upon him. Adolphe was tenderly regarding everything about him; he had carved a name on the bark of a tree at the foot of which he was seated, — the name of Eugénie. "Jeanneton, it is he! He loves me still!" cried she, and she was already in Adolphe's arms. Two hearts which understand each other have no need of explanations; already the past was no more than a dream. Adolphe and Eugénie had gone back to the day when they had confessed to each other their love. Jeanneton, hastened by Eugénie's exclamations, exclaimed joyfully on seeing Adolphe, and ran to kiss him, saying, —

"I knew well that he would come back."

Adolphe wished to marry Eugénie immediately, and it was not without trouble that they made him understand that she must give a year to Dupont's memory. But he could see her every day, and express freely his love for her, and surrender himself, when by her side, to the hope of a happiness which nothing could ever trouble.

Often, when Jeanneton saw Adolphe's transports of joy, she would say, "Ah, you would be still happier if you knew that —" But Eugénie would run, blushing, and put her finger on Jeanneton's lip, and the maid said no more.

The year rolled away, and nothing more had opposed the union of the two lovers. Adolphe had been to pay his respects to Monsieur and

Madame Moutonnet, and they gave him the most flattering reception. Adolphe knew to what this change was attributable, but he was careful not to appear aware of it; he was too happy, moreover, to preserve any resentment.

The marriage was to take place at the country place of the young man, and Madame and Monsieur Moutonnet drove there in one of their son-in-law's carriages. Madame preferred the top left open, although it rained on the day of their departure; and she desired the coachman to drive through the Rue Saint Martin, though it did not lie on his way; but she could not resist the desire to be seen in her son-in-law's carriage by her old acquaintances. M. Moutonnet had orders to drop his hat in the street, as they passed the shop of the Bernards, so that the carriage would be obliged to stop there for a moment.

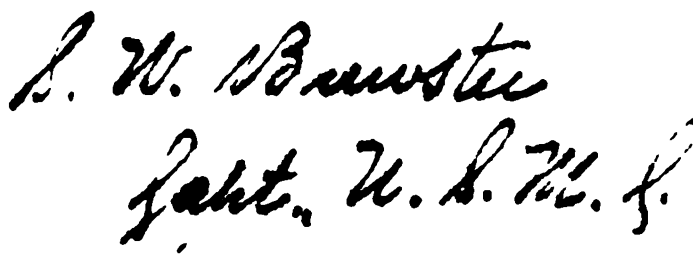
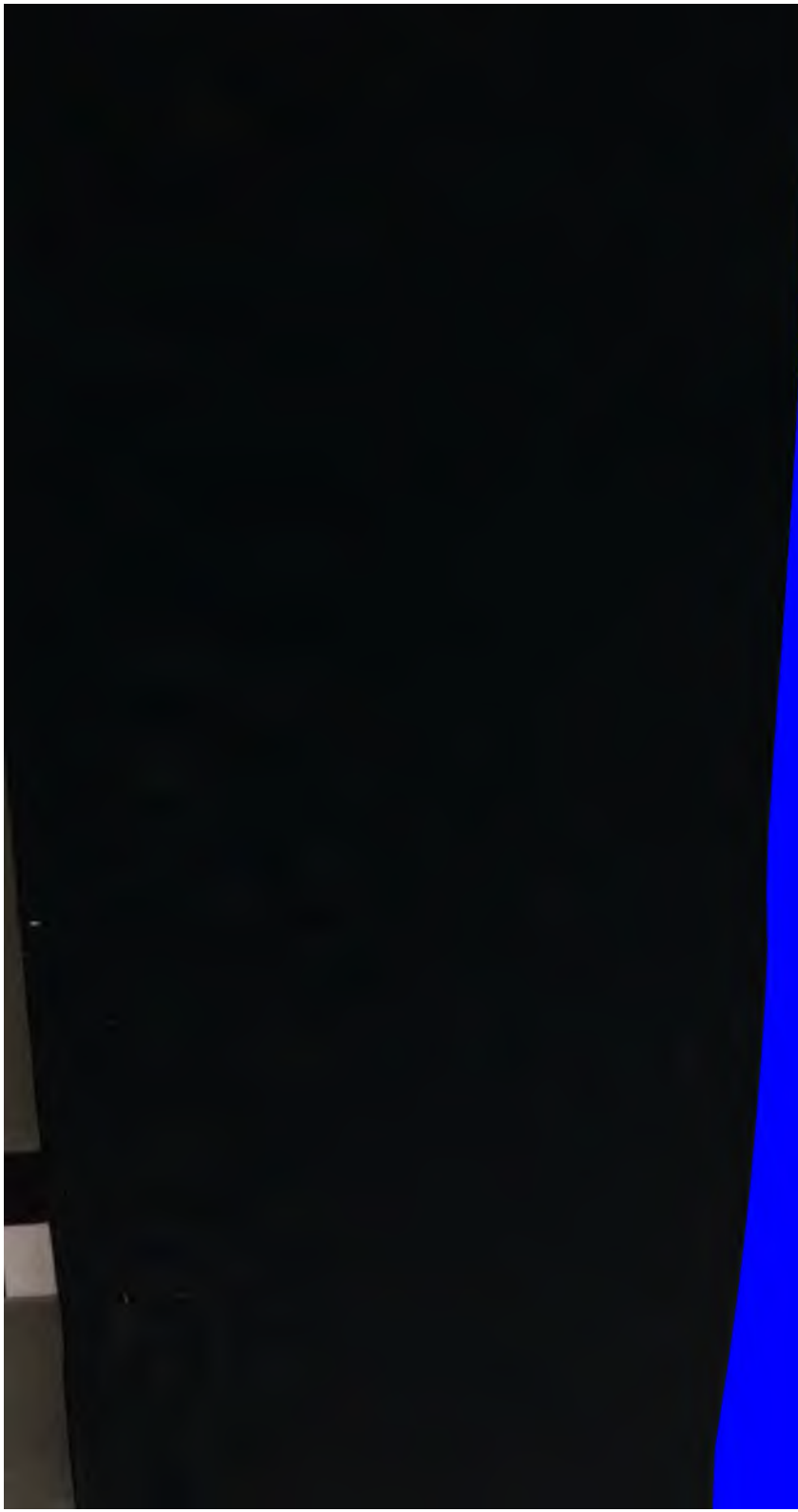
Charles and Louise participated in the happiness of Adolphe. They had quickly won Eugénie's friendship; for her to love them it was only necessary for her to learn what they had done for Adolphe. Accompanied by them, she, Adolphe and Jeanneton repaired to the château.

Bidois had been forewarned of what was going to happen, and for that day resigned his lessons in arithmetic. He ordered a fête, games, and dances; he prepared a reception for his master. The peasants had guns; the men servants, blunderbusses; and the young girls, garlands. The

men had been taught the number of volleys they were to fire, and the women the number of courtesies they were to make.

The great day arrived. They were all received with the reports of guns, and with the shouts and songs of the villagers. M. Moutonnet was afraid he might be wounded; but his wife thought that the noise conferred great distinction upon them, commanding her husband to be enchanted with it.

Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet could not cease admiring Adolphe's estate, while Eugénie had eyes but for her lover. At length Adolphe led Eugénie to the altar, to which this time she went without trembling, and Jeanneton was a witness to the happiness of her beloved mistress. M. Moutonnet again wept with joy, on beholding his daughter's marriage, while Madame Moutonnet shed no more tears on this than on the former occasion. Louise remarked to her husband, "They will love each other and be as happy as ourselves."

On the day following the wedding, Bidois, bowing profoundly to the bride, said,—

"Madame, marriage originated multiplication."